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## The effects of peer-conferencing on writing revisions in a second grade classroom

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*University of Northern Iowa*

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## The effects of peer-conferencing on writing revisions in a second grade classroom

### Abstract

Writing has long been known as one of the three "R's" in education. However, many educators lack instructional knowledge on how to teach writing. Revision and conferencing are part of the writing teacher's vocabulary, but little research exists on these topics. This study utilized qualitative and quantitative data to compare the effects of students trained in peer-conferencing and students not trained in peer-conferencing and the effect on their writing. The introduction presents the problem that led to the development of this study. A literature review provides existing research related to writing workshop, instruction in writing, revision, and collaboration through conferring. The methodology offers a framework of the study and the results of the data are analyzed. Findings of the study are shared in consideration of how instruction and modeling of peer-conferencing impact students. Finally, recommendations for further research are considered.

THE EFFECTS OF PEER-CONFERENCING ON WRITING REVISIONS IN A SECOND  
GRADE CLASSROOM

A Graduate Action Research Paper

Submitted to the

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Emily C. Guetzlaff

March 2013

This Action Research Paper by: Emily C. Guetzlaff

Titled: The Effects of Peer-Conferencing on Writing Revisions in a Second Grade Classroom

Has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the  
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Writing has long been known as one of the three “R’s” in education. However, many educators lack instructional knowledge on how to teach writing. Revision and conferencing are part of the writing teacher’s vocabulary, but little research exists on these topics. This study utilized qualitative and quantitative data to compare the effects of students trained in peer-conferencing and students not trained in peer-conferencing and the effect on their writing. The introduction presents the problem that led to the development of this study. A literature review provides existing research related to writing workshop, instruction in writing, revision, and collaboration through conferring. The methodology offers a framework of the study and the results of the data are analyzed. Findings of the study are shared in consideration of how instruction and modeling of peer-conferencing impact students. Finally, recommendations for further research are considered.

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## **Introduction**

Student writing has become a major concern in schools and an emphasis has been placed on increasing students' writing performance. In 2006 The National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges (NCW) released a report, *Writing and School Reform*. In their report they suggest that writing skills need to be improved if students in the United States are going to find success in school, college, and life. However, in order to make the needed improvements in student writing, instruction must be provided so they can develop writing strategies, skills, and knowledge, (De La Paz & Graham, 2002). In 2010 the nation's governors and education commissioners, through their representative organizations, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, led this development (Common Core Curriculum, 2010). The Common Core Standards included Writing Standards, which provided teachers guidance when determining what students would need to know by the end of the year. However, today many teachers lack knowledge of instructional strategies for teaching writing. The NCW (2006) agrees that more teacher support and professional development are needed if student writing is to improve. A revolution in the ways teachers are trained to teach writing can help students take hold of opportunities, imagine infinite possibilities, and overcome life's difficulties (The National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges, 2006).

## **Statement of the Problem**

While the expectation is to improve student writing, obstacles stand in the way. One of the biggest obstacles is time. Writing requires a daily commitment (Routman, 2005). Teaching, allowing time to write, conferring, reading and responding to each student's writing as a teacher requires a great deal of time.

A second obstacle is a lack of teacher knowledge about writing instruction. Students deserve instruction in writing (Calkins, 2006). Many teachers lack confidence teaching writing because of poor undergraduate preparation (Kiuahara & Hawken, 2009; Hillcocks, 2002, Bossone & Larson, 1980). This often leads to poor writing instruction or simply assigning students writing tasks with no instructional support.

I completed college with a minor in literacy education. I felt confident I would enter my teaching career with the tools necessary to be a successful teacher in all curricular areas, but especially reading and writing. Upon entering my first professional teaching position I had a goal of changing the lives of my students; becoming one of those teachers that Hollywood glorifies in movies. However, after being faced with the realities of the classroom, I found myself unprepared. I had no undergraduate courses dedicated to writing instruction. I could only recall a week my sophomore year where the term writing workshop was introduced. My lack of knowledge was holding me back.

I relied on what little knowledge I possessed and combined that with my own experiences as a student in elementary school. I began assigning my students writing tasks during our writing block and moving my classroom of students through the writing process in unison. I quickly became overwhelmed with the amount of work I had to accomplish with each student's piece of writing. It was then I decided to implement peer conferencing. I told my students that upon the completion of their draft they were to meet with a partner and conference about their writing to make sure it made sense. I felt great about the steps I was taking in improving my writing block, but then it occurred to me. I was telling my students to do everything and not teaching them anything. For conferencing with a partner for the purpose of revising to be effective, I felt some preparation of students would be needed.



With this in mind I encountered a third obstacle. There is a lack of published research on peer-conferencing and revising. These circumstances led me to design the research study described in this paper. The guiding questions that drove my study were:

1. Do 2<sup>nd</sup> graders who are trained to peer-conference use their conference to help with their own revisions? If so, how?
2. Does the instruction and modeling of peer-conferencing affect the quality of revisions made to 2<sup>nd</sup> graders writing? If so, how?
3. When 2<sup>nd</sup> graders are taught to peer-conference during revising, how does the quality of their final piece of writing compare to the writing of a peer who was not taught how to peer conference?
4. What connection, if any, is there between a student's ability and willingness to revise and his/her ability or willingness to help a peer in a writing conference?

As I began to gather and analyze the data, my questions shifted based on the nature of my findings. The new questions I created, that will be reported on in this study are:

1. Is instruction and modeling of peer-conferencing beneficial? If so, how?
2. Do 2<sup>nd</sup> graders who are trained to peer-conference find conferencing helpful? If so, why?
3. Do 2<sup>nd</sup> graders who are trained to peer-conference use their conference to help them revise their own writing? If so, how?

As teachers, we owe students the best. Writing is important and every student will travel the long road of written communication in the twenty-first century (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001).

### **Definition of Terms**

Before delving into the study, an overview of terms associated with my study will be provided.

- **Writing Workshop:** Writing Workshop is an organizational system that can foster student independence. Teachers provide time to write daily, allow student selected topics and differentiated instruction during writing conferences. Students learn from mentor texts, have goals to work on, have an authentic audience and revise their work (Jacobson, 2010). The writing workshop is not for teaching students what to write; it is to teach them how to write (Ray, 2001).
- **Revising:** The purpose of revising writing is to make its meaning clearer. The revision process involves changes to meaning, content, structure, and style (Heard, 2002). Revising consists of adding words, ideas, and sentences; deleting unnecessary parts; substituting parts of the writing, and rearranging parts by moving them around (Gillet & Beverly, 2001).
- **Editing:** Editing is the time to correct grammar, spelling and conventions (Sadler, 2003).
- **Peer-Conferencing:** Peer conferencing is an interactive dialogue between writers (Sadler, 2003). It requires collaboration between students with the intent to improve the writer's written message. Peer conferencing requires the listener to take on an advisory role because they are in charge of listening and responding to a peer's writing (Routman, 2005). Ultimately, it provides time to share thoughts about writing, generate ideas, and be collaborative problem solvers (Romeo, 2008).

## Literature Review

Reading, writing, and arithmetic have long been known as the three R's of education. For over a century these subjects have been heavily emphasized. While many educators are familiar with the three R's, it has become apparent that they are not given equal emphasis in the classroom. According to The National Commission on Writing report, *The Neglected R: The Need for a Writing Revolution*, "writing, education's second R, has become the neglected element of American school reform," (2003, p. 9). The teaching of writing is lacking throughout most of a child's schooling years.

Part of this neglect lies in the fact that many educators leave college ill equipped to teach writing, (National Commission on Writing, 2003). Many teacher education programs do not offer courses in writing instruction (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001), but do require courses in the teaching of reading and arithmetic. Teachers leaving their teacher education programs unprepared to meet the demands of teaching writing, often find it easier to not teach it at all, and simply assign a writing task. Teaching writing is hard (Abler-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). It is the most complex form of communication, but it is critical because it is one of the most common modes used to communicate (Abler-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007). Lucy Calkins found that "when students resist writing, teachers resist teaching writing," (1986, p. 4). Educators feel a lack of interest, but they often do not consider why it is that their students have come to dislike writing. They tend to continue pushing and requiring more writing assignments from their students causing further dislike, or cut it from their instruction altogether (Calkins, 1986).

Recognizing that writing instruction has become neglected, attempts to revive this missing R are developing, but often through the use of high stakes testing. Students need

authentic writing opportunities. Classroom teachers face the challenge that actual development of writing skills relies more on prior writing experience and not on a child's chronological age (Calkins, 2003). When children come in with various experiences due to the neglected teaching of writing, knowing where to begin and what to teach can be a struggle. Students need and deserve instruction in writing so that they can meet the demands of our evolving global society.

This literature review will help inform its readers about the existing research on writing workshop, writing instruction, revision, and conferencing with writers.

### **Writing Workshop**

While writing may be the neglected R in education and teachers may enter their careers feeling ill-equipped in the teaching of writing, there are ways for teachers to implement writing time and instruction into their daily schedules. In the early 1980's the writing workshop model was first shared. Research suggests the writing block consist of a mini-lesson, independent writing time, and authors' chair (Jacobson, 2010; Ray, 2001; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Calkins, 1986). The writing workshop emphasizes the idea that students need instruction in writing, not just an assignment to write. Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) describe the workshop as a generative part of the day in which students are in charge of creating their own texts. This is important for students since the majority of a student's day focuses on completing a series of tasks. The workshop puts the students in charge. They must become active learners while the teacher engages in responsive teaching. "In writing workshop, teachers invite children to do all the things a writer really does: research, explore, collect, interview, talk, read, stare off into space, co-author, and yes, pre-write, draft, revise, edit, and publish," (Ray, 2001, p. 5). Jacobson (2010) adds that this organizational system can foster independence when teachers provide daily time to write, allow students to select topics, differentiate instruction during conferences, and

provide authentic audiences. Ray believes the writing workshop to be highly structured. For a thriving workshop environment to occur a strong system of management needs to be in place (2001). She adds that successful writing workshops include choice, time, instruction, talk, periods of focused study, rituals to publish, and high expectations. Teachers are an important aspect to the success of a writing workshop and they are key to creating a classroom community supportive of writing. Calkins (1986) emphasizes that writing classrooms should be student-centered. This means that teachers must know their students and develop their instruction around those needs. A writing classroom must be a community where everyone can be a teacher and a student (Calkins, 1986).

The idea of the writing workshop has been around for nearly 30 years. The mini-lesson, independent writing time, and author's chair are its key components, yet many teachers still struggle with fostering students to become independent writers. Research has found this often happens when teachers over emphasize the product of the writing versus the process the writer uses to create a piece of writing. According to Jacobson (2010), to create independent writers teachers need to learn to release control slowly into their structured workshop environment. Strong instruction, allowing students' choice and recognizing that students will work through the process at their own pace, and not in unison, leads to more independent writers. The purpose of the writing workshop is not to teach students what to write, but how to write (Ray, 2001). Hale (2008) adds that students don't need teachers to give them ideas; they just need help learning how to access these ideas.

When implementing a writing workshop it is imperative for teachers to understand that the writing workshop is not a linear process where students work to complete steps of the writing process in order for each piece they begin. Nor is it to focus on individual traits of a program,

write from prompts to prepare for high-stakes testing, practice isolated skills, write over assigned topics without instruction, or write for purposes that students don't value (Routman, 2005).

While the simple structure of the workshop may allow teachers a framework to implement writing into their classrooms, two factors are crucial to student success: time and choice.

According to the National Writing Council (2003) time is one of the major challenges facing teachers in classrooms today. They state, "In today's schools, writing is a prisoner of time. Learning how to present one's thoughts on paper requires time. The sheer scope of the skills required for effective writing is daunting," (National Writing Council, 2003, p. 20). For this reason writing gets short shrift. Teachers may lack confidence in teaching writing and may blame the constraints of time for their lack of attention to writing instruction. However, if educators are to give writing the time it deserves, knowing that their students are expected to be writers, they must make time. Writing requires a daily commitment on the part of the teacher (Routman, 2005). Ray (2001) agrees that in order for writers to gain the experience they need it is best if students can work daily for a sustained block of time. Time to write is a step in the direction of implementing writing into a classroom and, so too, is time devoted to the instruction of writing. "Just as children have opportunities each day to read and to learn math, so too, they need time each day to write. Writing is far too important to be relegated to the status of busy work..." (Calkins, 2003, p. 4). Many argue that educators make time to teach reading and arithmetic, but do not find time for writing. "Writing is something you do, not something you know," (Ray, 2001, p. 25) therefore, "we need to teach every child to write," (Calkins, 2006, p. 7). We need to show them what quality writing looks like.

Time is a challenge many teachers encounter; writing requires a commitment of at least four days a week (Calkins, 2006; Routman, 2005). Calkins (2006) adds that the amount of time a

k-5 child needs is between fifty and sixty minutes a day for both instruction and writing time. If time cannot be guaranteed, then teachers should not bother teaching writing (Routman, 2005). The suggested time frames may seem high, but teachers must consider the importance of writing in education, society and individual success.

In addition to the commitment of time, researchers also believe that a consistent and predictable time to write is necessary (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Gillet & Beverly, 2001; Ray, 1999; Calkins, 1986). Students afforded the predictability of writing workshop time can begin to think more like writers. They begin to plan ahead and know they have time to record their ideas (Gilley & Beverly, 2001). It allows them to build their writing momentum. If students lack consistent and predictable time they often lose interest in their pieces. Making time to teach writing and allow students to write is important. If students are given sufficient time they are more likely to write well (Atwell, 1998).

The second crucial factor in a successful writing classroom is choice. Students have the freedom to choose not only their topic, but how they utilize the writing process, their organizational structure, even their intended audience. Students don't need teachers telling them what to write, they need help learning how to write and how to access the ideas they already have determined. In many classrooms teachers believe they are teaching writing when they tell their students to write and move the class through the entire writing process in unison. This often creates management issues as students complete each step of the writing process at different times. Teachers then face the dreaded words, "... done!", and scramble to keep everyone busy. Jacobson (2010) refers to this type of teacher-directed instruction as "spinning the plates." In this classroom the teacher provides the topic and as students write she hurries around the room to meet all the students' needs. When one child finishes all of the spinning plates come crashing

down since students were dependent on her for their writing tasks. This organizational structure is not writing workshop.

In a writing workshop each student writer works at his or her pace. No more days of simply assigning a piece of writing and giving a due date (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Choice, in its broadest context, is one of the most important factors to student success in writing. For many the idea of choice may seem challenging, but think of the opportunities it affords student writers. As educators, many experienced writing just as Jacobson described. The teacher assigned the topic and allotted time, and the students worked as much in unison as the teacher could manage. This approach leads to a lack of student motivation because the topics often have no personal connection to the student (Hale, 2008; Abler-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007; Fletcher & Portalup, 2001; Ray, 2001). Student choice is prevalent in a writing workshop classroom (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001) because allowing students to write about things they care about leads to a stronger connection to writing (Calkins, 2006). Teachers cannot underestimate the teaching that goes into helping students access those writing ideas. While choice of topic and use of time are important, teachers may be challenged with requiring specific types of writing due to state standards. However, Ray (2001) challenges that teaching and facilitating required types of writing does not mean teachers need to dictate what students write about or how they allocate the time permitted in meeting the requirement.

As current and future educators look at the practices they will implement in their classrooms to support the need for writing instruction, the writing workshop model is a framework that can provide an organizational structure. Alongside the writing workshop should stand the key factors of commitment of time and allowing for student choice. With the basics tackled all that needs to be determined now is “what to teach?”



## Writing Workshop Instruction

The National Commission on Writing (2003) found that students can write, but they cannot write well. This is evident when students in higher education cannot meet collegiate writing demands and carry that deficit into their professional work environment. De La Paz and Graham (2002) add that this is due, in part, to writing being one of the most difficult skills for students to master and a lack of instruction being provided. “Back at the turn of the century, when few people went to college, the well-educated person was someone with good handwriting and spelling,” (Graves, 1994, p. 32). More rarely are readers concerned with one’s inability to formulate or express ideas in a clear and concise manner (Graves, 1994). “Writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many,” (The National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 11).

Student writing is a major concern in schools and emphasis has been placed on improving student performance. However, to make the needed improvements, instruction must be provided to develop writing strategies, skills, and knowledge, not just on mechanics (De La Paz & Graham, 2002). “When school systems recognize that writing is a crucial tool for learning to read and to think across every subject area, then writing instruction becomes non-negotiable,” (Calkins, 2003, p. 4).

Calkins (1986) noted that traditionally, writing was not taught, but rather assigned and then corrected. Gillet and Beverly (2001) write that many practicing teachers experienced writing in classrooms where the focus was the product not the process. It was teacher-centered. Writing topics were assigned and the measure of good writing was handwriting, grammar, and conventions. While they found that this focus still exists in classrooms, they note this trend is changing and many classrooms are now focused on a process approach. In recent decades the theory and practice of writing instruction has shifted (McCarthy, 1994) from a focus on product

to a focus on process (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Heard, 2002; McCarthey, 1994). According to Gillet and Beverly (2001), teachers who focus on the process approach to writing allow students the opportunity to learn transferable writing skills because students are provided the necessary time. Teachers still utilizing the product approach emphasize textbooks and writing exercises that are inauthentic to the writer making their learning less transferable.

Abler-Morgan, Hessler, and Konrad (2007) find that the process approach to writing and effective writing instruction are steps in the right direction, but students will continue to struggle with transferring skills and knowledge to other writing tasks. They suggest that as part of the process approach to teaching writing, and during effective instruction, student's personal writing should be used as the instructional text. They found this helps students make generalizations about writing and more effectively transfer their knowledge. Most of the research did not share specific instructional topics. Ray (2001) states, "The teaching of writing should revolve around strategies, techniques, and understandings that are not linked to specific material," (p. 122). This is important because, "If our content isn't big enough to serve students across many different writing topics, then it's not good writing instruction," (Ray, 2001, p. 127).

Ray (2001) warns against purchasing writing workshop kits and suggests that these pre-boxed kits mask the authentic writing workshop. Kits allow students' topic choices only from cards, providing scripted questions for teachers, and restrict teachers and students to pre-chosen focus lessons for the year. These kits don't focus on the writer (Ray, 2001). Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) note that writing is not one skill, but rather a bundle of skills, and they are all teachable. Abler-Morgan, Hessler, and Konrad (2007) add that teaching students to generalize and transfer their writing knowledge is key. Teachers cannot provide instruction on every writing task students will ever encounter. They suggest, similar to Ray (2001), that for students to

generalize their writing knowledge and skills, and for transfer to occur, instructional decisions should be based on the big ideas of writing (Alber-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007). Similarly, “The skills and strategies that writers use are the same across the grade levels; their depth and sophistication are what increase,” (Routman, 2005, p. 13). Graves (1994) cautions that teaching writing is not correcting errors. Teaching writing is showing students how to write and how to develop the skills needed to improve as a writer. Calkins (2006) suggests one way to help is to allow students to write for an audience and not just the teacher. One of the essentials to the teaching of writing has to be students being engaged in their writing, having an audience to share it with, and learning to see themselves as a writer (Calkins, 1986).

After topics for instruction have been determined teachers must consider how they will teach their students. Many teachers do not come from classrooms where a strong writing instruction was modeled and cannot imagine what teaching in a writing workshop would look like (Ray, 2001). Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) agree that much of what teachers do is determined by what was done to them as students. According to De La Paz and Graham (2002) explicit and extended writing instruction is lacking in many schools and suggests two reasons. First, many teachers believe explicit instruction in writing is not necessary and that informal or incidental teaching methods will promote writing development. Second, explicit and extended writing instruction of strategies, skills and knowledge is counterproductive because it may cause writers to ignore the non-linear nature of writing. In contrast, Gersten and Baker (2001), as cited in Alber-Morgan, Hessler, and Konrad (2007), found that explicit instruction is needed for writing skills, strategies, and the process. Ray (1999) found that the conceptualization of how to best teach was traditionally driven by the thought of what to teach, then how to teach, and finally how to determine whether learning occurred. She argues that in a writing classroom this thought

process needs to change. Teachers need to first consider what students already know, then determine what to teach them, and finally plan how to teach. This model allows for a student-centered approach when considering how to best provide instruction.

Within the process approach to teaching writing, Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) state that the workshop is student-centered and writing instruction focuses on the writer. It is okay if every piece a student writes is not a masterpiece (Ray, 2001). We teach the writer, not writing (Calkins, 1986; Ray 1999). Research has found that for students to invest themselves in their writing, their teachers also need to be seen as writers within the classroom. When teachers write with their students, they have the opportunity to walk in the shoes of a writer, making instruction more powerful and relatable to students (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Routman (2005) adds that in addition to the teacher participating as a writer she also needs to connect writing and reading as reciprocal processes during instruction.

While research has found the process approach to be best in providing instruction within the writing workshop, Ray (2001) adds, “planning, organizing, and teaching in a writing workshop is very challenging work,” (p. 86). Ray (2001) continues, “teaching is thought of as something that supports and extends the ongoing work of student writers...” (p. 126). Routman (2005) suggests lessons in writing should come from what teachers see students doing or not doing in their writing. Instruction during the writing workshop is essential to helping students develop as writers, and skills taught should be selected because the writer needs them and not because they are on a checklist, or part of the scope and sequence, or found within a writing program.

Ray (2001) states that the teaching method may vary between, whole group, small group, and one-on-one conferences, but students need daily instruction to support their writing. As part

of the writing workshop framework, research has found the mini-lesson to be the best method in providing writers' with instruction. A mini-lesson is a ten to fifteen minute lesson given by the teacher that adds knowledge, skills, and strategies to the students' writing repertoire (Anderson, 2000; Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Jacobson, 2010; Ray, 2001). Atwell (1998) originally agreed the lesson should be ten to fifteen minutes, but transformed her thinking into believing lessons could take as long as twenty minutes and might involve more interaction than direct teaching. There is minimal disagreement on the amount of time the mini-lesson should last, but students do not need to utilize the instruction that day, but rather when it makes sense in their own writing (Anderson, 2000; Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Jacobson, 2010; Ray, 2001).

There is agreement that the content of the mini-lesson needs to be relevant to the whole class. Ray (2001) and Hale (2008) agree that students utilize the instruction when it makes sense in their own writing, and also suggest adding the use of a Try-It journal. This journal allows students to practice the instruction provided in the mini-lesson that day in a risk-free way, while allowing teachers the opportunity to make decisions about further instructional needs (Hale, 2008). This opportunity to apply the mini-lesson the same day as instruction is important, but is not intended to be the focus of what writers chooses to do during independent writing time. Teachers can utilize student Try-It journals to reteach a lesson to the whole class, a small group, or even one student. One-to-one conferencing can be a powerful method for delivering instruction because it offers direct instruction in response to a student's individual need not shared by a larger group.

Atwell (1998) recognizes that the teaching of writing is difficult because determining what to teach can be a challenge. She found that keeping records of students writing, reading

student writing, and keeping notes of writing observations can help teachers determine their next steps in instruction. Ray (2001) adds that the writing students read aloud to the class in the author's chair also provide teachers with another opportunity to identify future instructional opportunities. Research suggests utilizing these steps to make the instructional decision making process easier. Now that students have begun drafting and have been provided some instructional basics, they are ready for continued instruction related to steps in the writing process such as revision.

### **Revision**

The revision process involves changes to meaning, content, structure, and style (Heard, 2002). Revising consists of adding words, ideas, and sentences; deleting unnecessary parts; substituting parts of the writing, and rearranging parts by moving them around (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). The purpose of revising writing is to make its meaning clearer. The lack of research on revision suggests that many educators themselves are not familiar with this part of the writing process. This has impacted students, as Sadler (2003) found that many of them do not have a clear understanding of revision. Harper (1997) reports that "Many students view revision as a rewording activity," (p. 193). Some students consider the processes interchangeable. Editing is the time to correct grammar, spelling, and conventions (Sadler, 2003). The revising stage of the writing process is when teachers encourage students to make improvements for meaning. This differs from the editing stage where the student focuses on improving the mechanics of writing (Abler-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007). Revision is one of the writing skills least researched, least examined, least understood, and usually the least taught, (Graves, 1994). The instructional focus shifted from process-oriented writing to student performance on assessments. Editing was deemed the means by which to judge proficiency in writing and students began equating revision

with editing. Revision was no longer looked at as a way to clarify thoughts, improve words choice, or sentence fluency, but rather an act of fixing frivolous errors determined by an adult (Morris-Kindzierski, 2009). “Motivating students to revise and then finally edit their work can be a formidable challenge,” (Abler-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007, p. 112). Heard (2002) adds, “Revision has always been one of those unpopular topics like poetry; revision has been disliked, ignored, and forced on people for a long time,” (p. 105).

Students need instruction to clarify the difference between revising and editing. In addition they need instruction on what revision is and how writers can use revision to improve or clarify their writing. Sadler (2003) emphasizes the importance of keeping revision and editing separate in the minds of students. Editing is the time to correct grammar, spelling and conventions. In many writing workshop classrooms, revision is seen as what is done once drafting is complete and editing takes place after revision. Research cautions against this linear approach to writing. Routman (2005) states, “Writing is not a sequential process with revision neatly tucked in midway,” (p. 159). Sadler (2003) agrees that revision is not a sequential step in the writing process, but rather a part of the writing cycle. Skilled writers move seamlessly from drafting to revision throughout their pieces. In fact, skilled writers could potentially spend more time revising their work than actually composing a draft. Students need to be taught that revision does not just take place after drafting is complete, but rather that it occurs throughout the writing process (Heard, 2002).

Revision occurs when the writer considers the message, and takes time to polish that message, for the intended audience. The writer reads and rereads work. Revision is not just making a few cosmetic changes, but a way of reseeing writing (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1994; Heard, 2002). It requires both reflection and the ability to sense other options within the writing

(Graves, 1994). “The ability to revise is significant because it helps the writer reflect and clarify their own thinking with the goal of improving the writing,” (Dix, 2006, p. 566). Students need time to rethink and rewrite their text in order to create engaging pieces of writing for their reader (Davis & McGrail, 2009). Beal, Garrod, and Bonitatibus (1990) discovered that teaching students how to self-question could increase their ability to identify when critical information was missing.

Heard (2002) found that most writing teachers focus on the revising techniques of adding details and cutting words out. Teachers need to teach students that the revision process involves changes to meaning, content, structure, and style. More specifically, Gillet & Beverly (2001) stress four basic components of revision teachers can consider when determining what instruction to provide students. These four basic components are: 1) adding words, ideas, and sentences, 2) deleting unnecessary parts, 3) substituting parts of their writing, 4) and, rearranging parts by moving them around.

Students will take revision more seriously when they are part of a classroom environment that supports writing and provides time to write. It can only be learned when they have opportunities to do a lot of writing (Routman, 2005). While revision is important, it is unrealistic to expect students to revise everything they write (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1994; Routman, 2005). Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) and Graves (1994) stress that students should be able to select the pieces they deem important enough to revise and eventually publish.

The teaching of revision is critical to students’ development of both thinking and creating quality pieces of writing (Dix, 2006). “Most kids are not eager to revise. They assume an ‘I’ve done it and now I’m done with it’ attitude toward their writing,” (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001, p. 65). Beal, Garrod, and Bonitatibus (1990) found that students’ revisions are often encouraged or



required by teachers and do not improve the clarity of their writing. “Most see revision as punitive. Younger writers even see revision as what they have to do when the teacher thinks their writing isn’t finished,” (Heard, 2002, p.1). Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) also found that students may have a negative view of revision, seeing it as fixing a “bad” piece of writing. Even if students recognize that their writing could use revision, they lack the knowledge and skills needed to make the improvements (Sadler, 2003). Therefore, instruction on revision is essential. If students are simply told to revise, they often feel that adding or deleting a few words means successful revision (Harper, 1997).

“Before teaching students how to revise, teach them why they need to revise,” (Sadler, 2003). Writers write for an audience. Students need to know this in order to understand why revision occurs. The purpose of revision is to make meaning for the intended audience. Students who understand this concept are more likely to approach writing expecting to make changes (Sadler, 2003). For young writers this concept can be a challenge. Revision requires them to evaluate their writing, identify areas for improvement, determine alternative options, and finally revise. They have to keep their purpose and audience in mind (Dix, 2006). Ultimately, students are often reluctant to revise because they feel their intended message is already clear to their audience (Beal, Garrod & Bonitatibus, 1990; Davis & McGrail, 2009). Once students have been given instruction and begin revising, they will need support from other writers. Revising alone is difficult (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). Students need feedback during this stage of the process from both teachers and peers (Abler-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007). The physical process of adding, deleting, substituting, or rearranging material is simple enough, but the mental process revision requires is challenging. It is one of the most complex parts of writing (Sadler, 2003).

“Revising is hard work, and for many students, an unpleasant and often uncomfortable chore...they must see what they have written for what it actually is, not what they wish it to be,” (Williams, 1998, as cited in Sadler, 2003). Children do not suddenly begin revising; they need guidance (Graves, 1994). Providing revision instruction results in more meaningful changes to students’ drafts (Morris-Kindzierski, 2009). Heard (2002) argues that student writing may need work, but the real problem is that students don’t know how to revise. They usually lack knowledge of revision strategies. To help resolve this, Gillet and Beverly (2001) suggest teachers begin teaching revision strategies at an early age in school and that instruction continue throughout the year. With instruction students can begin to understand that writing includes rewriting.

You actually can change how your students approach revision as you model specific revision strategies and give them time to practice those strategies with you nearby. The key is changing students’ mindset about what revision means, why it’s important, and how to achieve it. Given manageable strategies and a classroom culture of support, students should come to realize that a first draft is just that-a draft, and that the need to revise is not a sign of failure, but rather an expected step in the writing process. (Sadler, 2003, p. 26)

When students understand this, their concept of revision will change (Heard, 2002). During teacher-student conferences revision can be a focus. When teachers provide students with a revision strategy to try, model the strategy, and challenge them to try it out, a structure for revision is created where the student can feel safe, comfortable and successful (Heard, 2002).

As teachers, we want our students to revise without us telling them to do so (Routman, 2005), but forcing them to revise is not the way to get them excited about the process (Fletcher &

Portalupi, 2001). Instruction in revision strategies and time to practice and apply their learning can help students see revising as a way to enhance a good piece of writing. Heard (2002) believes that revision must be concrete and tangible for students. Abler-Morgan, Hessler, and Konrad (2007) suggest after a lesson on revision students be directed back into their own writing to look for places to apply what was taught. When teachers model and discuss the process with students and provide revision strategies, students gain insight into the experiences and feelings about revising. Students see the options available to writers as they compose. This can help open their minds to potential revisions in the future (Heard, 2002). Through teacher modeling, students can understand the thinking behind revision because they know what it sounds and looks like (Routman, 2005). This is important "...if they are to do that thinking and revising themselves" (Routman, 2005, p. 156).

### **Collaboration**

Collaboration was a key component in my research. Not only was I modeling how writers collaborate with one another, but students were becoming collaborative partners for the purpose of peer conferencing. Collaboration is an important part of the learning process in any classroom. Johnston (2012) states, "Most of us were schooled in monologic classrooms, and in the process, we learned to value facts and certainty," (p. 60). When classrooms lack collaborative opportunities the teachers' ideas can become the only truth. Turner (1997), as cited in Romeo (2008), found allowing time for social interaction and collaboration increased student engagement and motivation. Vygotsky (1978), as cited in Romeo (2008) found "social collaboration also enhances thinking," (p. 37). When students are given time for discussion, they are in control of their own development and learning opportunities to expand their thinking occur. Collaborative opportunities to think aloud together allow students to develop an

understanding for other's thinking and can spark new thoughts for themselves (Johnston, 2012). Ultimately, "Students in dialogic classrooms come to value their conversations because they are engaging and because they learn from them" (Johnston, 2012, p. 57). The writing workshop is an opportunity for students to engage in collaboration and discussion.

Sadler (2003) believes the writing workshop should include time for writers to meet with others to discuss a particular piece of their writing. Talking as a part of writing is important; writers need time to talk (Ray, 2001; Routman, 2005). Writing is a social act and talking is essential to the healthy maintenance of any writing workshop (Ray, 2001; Styslinger, 2008). Affording students' time to talk and collaborate can positively impact the quality of student writing. Routman (2005) found, "Informal conversations among students as they write influences the amount and quality of revisions students are willing to make. Conversations with others help students express their ideas more fully and make them their own" (p. 184). "Talking provides those necessary opportunities for students to externalize language that might later be utilized when writing" (Styslinger, 2008, p. 211). In addition to time for conversing, students need an environment that supports strong relationships and rapport among students. "Good relationships inspire good conversations. Good conversations influence good writing" (Kaufman, 2000, p. 99).

Being able to speak the language, or discourse, of a writer is an important part of helping students feel comfortable and confident in speaking about their own writing (Anderson, 2000). Some teachers feel students are incapable of conversing about their writing because they lack the specific forms of discourse used by writers. Anderson (2000) argues that students know how to have many different types of conversations. Students can negotiate with parents, debate topics, and gossip. Each of these conversational styles is learned from experience, observation and immersion. Similarly, children can learn how to have conversations about their writing.

Anderson (2000) agrees this can be challenging. Shifting students from simply telling what their writing piece is about to sharing the work they are doing as a writer is not easy. It is important students know how to use the language of a writer and be immersed into a classroom that emphasizes talking like writers. “Students tend to take up the language of our interactions with them,” (Johnston, 2012, p. 50). Immersing students in the discourse of writing will encourage its utilization in conversations.

**Conferring.** Talk during the writing workshop often occurs while conferring. Routman (2005) describes a writing conference as a meeting to discuss student work. “A conference is teaching we do in response to what individual children tell us and show us, we can’t plan ahead for what we will say and we have to be ready to respond to anything,” (Ray, 2001, p. 155). Its purpose is to teach and not simply help. If teachers provide only help, students remain dependent. They become reliant on their teacher to get them out of writing dilemmas (Ray, 2001). Ultimately the purpose of a conference is to allow opportunity to converse about writing. It is more than the teacher talking with students about their writing; it is a writer talking with other writers (Anderson, 2000).

Writing conferences can take on different purposes. The intent may be to encourage, teach, assess, or set goals (Routman, 2005). A conference can be formal or informal, short or long, public or private, in whole groups, small groups, or even one-on-one. The conference can be led by the teacher or the student (Routman, 2005). All these scenarios suggest conferring during writing workshop can look different depending on the purpose. Calkins (1986) adds that conferring may help students with content, design, process, or evaluation. Content conferences focus on the writing topic helping students develop ideas or stay on track with a topic already being drafted. The purpose is the “what” of the students’ writing. Design conferences focus on

structure while process conferences focus on the “how” of writing. Evaluation conferences focus on teaching students to recognize what good writing sounds like. One-on-one conferences should always be part of the writing workshop (Hale, 2008). However, she also found when multiple students could benefit from similar instruction group conferences may be utilized. Gillet and Beverly (2001) believe a conference can be done one-on-one, in a pair, or even in small groups.

Ray (1999) and Calkins (1986) believe individualized writing conferences are an integral part of the writing workshop. They allow for one-on-one instruction opportunities and consider the student’s immediate need, resulting in authentic instruction (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Ray (2001) found conferring with individual writers is probably the hardest part of the writing workshop, but Jasmine and Weiner (2007) found it crucial to the writing process. These conferences help writers see their work through the eyes of someone else, developing a sense of audience and potentially writing more clearly (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). McCarthy (1994) found researchers and practitioners believe writing conferences provide students with an opportunity to become more critical readers of the own writing. Routman (2005) believes conferring with students and having them read their writing aloud will cause them to naturally cut, add, and make changes on the spot because they hear how their writing sounds. Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) feel teachers should read the writing aloud during a conference in order to help the writer hear their writing in a new way. Hale (2008) disagrees and believes teachers should read the writing to themselves in an effort to save time.

Individual conferences occur during the independent writing portion of the workshop (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Ray, 2001). Many writing workshop classroom teachers believe they must wait until a student has completed a draft before conferring. A study by Jasmine and Weiner (2007) found that teachers often stay within the drafting stage for long periods of time

because one-on-one writing conferences are hard to manage due to student numbers. Anderson (2000) argues that teachers do not need to wait to confer until drafts are completed. There are different kinds of work done at different points in the writing process. Conferences should focus on the need the student has during that portion in their own writing process.

Writing conferences are important because they help students in their writing (Jasmine & Weiner, 2001). Spandel (2009) reminds teachers that students should not walk away from a conference with a polished draft, but with an idea of where to go next as a writer. Anderson (2000) describes becoming a better writer as using what has been taught during a conference and applying it to future writings. Essentially, the purpose of the conference is to allow children to teach their teacher what they know about writing so their teacher can teach them become more effective writers (Graves, 1994).

There is no right place for the teacher to confer. Teachers may travel to the student or the student may travel to the teacher (Hale, 2008). Anderson (2008) believes conferences should occur with the teacher out amongst the writers. Atwell (1998) adds that traveling to the student gives the teacher more control over the length of the conference. Both Hale (2008) and Anderson (2000) agree that teachers should not worry about disrupting other students when traveling around the room. It can provide the student being conferred with, and also those around, the opportunity to listen and potentially learn something to apply to their writing.

Determining who to conference with can provide a challenge. Kaufman (2000) found teacher-initiated conferences to be successful, but favored student-initiated conferences where a student can articulate a specific concern about a piece of writing and demonstrate they value their writing enough to seek feedback. Jacobson (2010) agrees. Conferring is important, but when teachers assign conference times each week the result is writing dependence. It takes away

the spontaneity. She suggests students sign-up for writing conferences themselves when it is most useful for them.

The organizational structure of a writing conference is important. Writing conferences should incorporate three stages: (1) research, (2) decide, (3) teach (Calkins, 2003; Hale, 2008; Wood, 2001). Calkins (2003) adds that teachers should also link instruction to future writing. Wood (2001) suggests keeping a record of the conference and its content. Jacobson (2010) outlines a different model for conference structure. The teacher should begin by setting a goal for the conference, reflect on what's been written, point out something positive, question the author, and finally teach one skill. Regardless of the organizational structure, most researchers agree conferences should be short and explicit (Anderson, 2000; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Jacobson, 2010; Ray, 2001). Teachers need to resist the temptation to fix everything (Anderson, 2000). Research has found only one technique, strategy, or concept should be taught (Anderson, 2000; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Hale, 2008). Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) add this is important because the goal is not to improve a particular piece of writing, but rather to improve all the writing a child will do.

Anderson (2000) believes conferences should also follow a conversational structure. During a conference both the teacher and student have roles. The student should take the lead role in describing the work as the writer. The teacher should listen, ask questions, clarify, and deepen their understanding of the student's work. The conversation structure then shifts to the teacher in the lead role. The teacher determines what to teach and provides instruction with the goal of the child becoming a better writer. Anderson (2000) found teachers often worry about what to say during a conference, but relying on generic questions and specific topics to be



covered can cause problems. Teachers need to be knowledgeable in a wide range of writing skills, not just writing mechanics (Hale, 2008).

The conference should not be solely controlled by the teacher. This results in the student taking a less vested interest in the outcome (Anderson, 2000). Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) found the best writing conferences to be student led. Calkins (1986) argues students must learn to be critical readers of their own writing. When the conference results in the child's writing matching the teacher's personal interpretation of the piece, writers remain dependent. Calkins (1986) found that teachers can help students become critical readers of their writing by asking broad questions. This keeps the writing ball in their court and the student remains in control.

Heard (2002) contributes several fundamentals she utilizes when conferring with student writers. She advises not to revise the writing for the student, not to feel obligated to meet with each writer daily, avoiding authoritative language, and trusting the writer. Teachers who complete revision for students continue the cycle of dependence. It takes ownership away from the writer because personal voice may be lost. In a classroom of writers, meeting with each student each day is not only unrealistic, but unnecessary. Authoritative language can cause a writer to make changes, but lack the understanding to transfer in future writing. Trusting the writer is often the toughest. Seeing students struggle and make mistakes is difficult for teachers. Correcting things immediately does not allow for independence to occur. Trusting the writer requires the teacher to provide time for the students to make discoveries about writing on their own.

In addition to the organizational and conversational conference structures, student-teacher rapport also impacts student's application of conference instruction. When a response to the writer ignores intentions it can damage motivation (Swaim, 1998). Hale (2008) suggests that

focusing on students' writing strengths can improve motivation to write and self-efficacy. This can result in openness to the teaching points they need. A study by Kaufman (2000) found that strong rapport usually results in a productive conference. He suggests that students who have a stronger rapport with their teacher are more likely to correctly interpret suggestions. They see the ideas coming from an experienced writer and not as directive statements. Students who lack this rapport with their teacher often refuse the suggestions seeing them as a critique of their writing (Kaufman, 2000).

Instruction for the writer is the overall purpose of a writing conference, however feedback can be provided to help the writer make decisions about writing. As a part of the conference Nancy Atwell (1998) suggests teachers build on what students know rather than pointing out mistakes. A study by Nelson and Schunn (2009) found that when feedback is specific, for example, by stating the problem, offering a solution, or providing the location of the suggested change, students are more likely to implement changes than when feedback is more general in nature. Students are the authors of their own work. When given feedback they must determine how to use it. When students understand they are still in control of their writing, it builds confidence and ownership (McLeod, Brown, McDaniels, & Sledge, 2009). Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) agree. The writer must determine if and when to implement an idea given during a conference. A study by Swaim (1998) concluded that if students come away from a conference with the focus on the reaction of the audience, not on something they had to change, they would gain more of an honest response from their peers.

While feedback is often provided during a conference, research does not always agree on whether or what type of praise should be part of that feedback. Some research suggests offering students praise, while others caution against it. Routman (2005) believes teachers should begin

conferences with a compliment for the writer, noting something done well. She feels this encourages students to continue to do what they have done well. The purpose of a compliment is to find something in the child's writing that should be continued in future writing (Calkins, 2006). Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) add that giving concrete praise early in the conference can open students up to receiving suggestions on improving their piece. However, Peter Johnston (2012) cautions that praise carries risk. It can distract students from their focused activity and turn their thought process to pleasing their audience. It can suggest judgment is being passed. Atwell (1998) suggests teachers should avoid general praises of student writing. Gillet and Beverly (2001) adds that complimenting, or suggesting improvements, can foster dependence on the teacher. They suggest using questions about the writing piece as a way to get students talking about what they have done. This conversation can reveal the student's concerns. Ultimately, successful conferences should leave students with an eagerness and enthusiasm to write (Calkins, 1986).

**Peer-Conferencing.** Despite the variance of opinion over the use of praise during writing conferences,

Even well-intentioned teachers cannot provide all of the feedback and reflection needed as sheer numbers prevail against their intentions. Help is at hand. You can develop reflective critics within your class by teaching your students how to talk about another's writing during a peer conference. (Sadler, 2003, p. 22)

Wong (2000), as cited by Sadler (2003), states, "Peer conferencing is an interactive dialogue between writers," (p. 22). Peer conferencing provides time to share thoughts about writing, generate ideas, and be problem solvers (Romeo, 2008). According to Styslinger (2008), peer conferencing can focus on revision with the intention to improve the written message. In

addition, peer conferences require the student to take on an advisory role. They are in charge of listening and responding to a peer's writing (Routman, 2005). Gillet and Beverly (2001) recognize while peer conferencing may be time consuming and less productive than teacher-student conferences, they are valuable in the writing classroom. Teachers should think of peer conferences with a focus on the process of conferring and not so much the resulting product. Peer conferencing benefits both social and writing skills.

Peer work is often a motivational tool for students (Alber-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007). Students prefer the opportunity to work with a partner during revision. Suggesting an increase in motivation to write, (Morris-Kindzierski, 2009) reported students who revised with a peer showed increased appropriate peer interaction, decreased writing apprehension, and signs of internalizing cognitive-writing strategies. "According to Piaget, peer interactions are crucial to the child's construction of social and moral feelings, values, and social and intellectual competence," (DeVries & Zan, 1994, p. 53). Atwell (1998) adds that during the adolescent years social relationships come first. Allowing those relationships to be part of the writing workshop makes sense. In addition to the social benefits peer conferencing can provide, research has shown positive effects on student writing.

Peer partnerships in writing allow students to be excited about independent writing because they can interact with peers, share their writing, and learn to revise for an audience (Hsu, 2009). They are given a chance to provide feedback, make decisions, and potentially implement revisions (Hsu, 2009). Diab (2009) concluded peer support allowed students to accomplish things together that could not have been done alone. Routman (2005) found when students have conversations with peers about current pieces of writing they are more likely to make advancements in their writing. Peer interactions can also create positive feelings towards writing

and encourage students to have a positive mindset about revision strategies (Morris-Kindzierski, 2009). Another benefit that students shift from teacher dependence to learning to support one another as writers. Peer interaction during peer conferences is likely to help students progress when it is spontaneous, informal, and not teacher directed (Routman, 2005). It is important for writers to confer with fellow writers on a regular basis. Gillet and Beverly (2001) believe peers are important to students' development in writing. They demand greater clarity, accuracy, and precision to understand the intended message, making peers a more demanding audience than teachers. Morris-Kindzierski's (2009) study found students who independently revised made fewer conventional errors, used fewer words, and had more repetition of words. Students who engaged in peer revision had more detailed, slightly longer, and more organized drafts. While much of the research focuses on benefits to student revisions during peer conferences, Abler-Morgan, Hessler, and Konrad (2007) also found allowing students to work with peers during the revision process resulted in positive outcomes related to the quality of student's written expression. Hayes and Flower (1986), as cited by Abler-Morgan, Hessler, and Konrad (2007), determined when students have difficulty finding their own errors in revision it is because they are too familiar with the text being read. Peers, lacking familiarity with a text, were more likely to spot problems.

Jasmine and Weiner (2007) found that all first grade participants in their study enjoyed working with partners during peer-revision time. However, while peer revision does provide time to converse and opportunities for improved writing, the process itself can be impacted by the gender of the partnership (Styslinger, 2008). Haswell and Haswell (1995), as cited by Styslinger (2008), found students tend to be more harsh on their own gender when conferencing. In a study conducted by Styslinger (2008) it was noted that female-female partnerships, may

experience fewer benefits due to concern about the peer relationship rather than their own needs as a writer. She suggested that women more often try to please the partner and weave more personal conversation into their revision conversation than female-male or male-male partnerships. The female-female conversation tends to be more off-task or superficial. Styslinger (2008) questions if the amount of off-task behavior is due to the potential of hurtful advice being given. "Peer conferences won't work unless writers trust that their peers won't shoot them down," (Atwell, 1998, p. 75). However, research agrees that utilizing peer conferencing during writing workshop is a valuable resource for teachers. Peers are always available; this cannot always be said of the teacher (Gillet & Beverly, 2001).

Research supports the use of peer conferencing and acknowledges limited time for teachers to confer with all students, but many teachers do not utilize this teaching method. Calkins (1986) found teachers often suggest they have tried peer conferencing and it was unsuccessful. She challenges this by asking, "If you tried math and it didn't work would you give up? If the children couldn't do the math, we would show them how, we would help them. Yet somehow we expect children to confer well with each other without our guidance," (p. 129). A study by Lundstrom and Baker (2008) suggested when students were taught to give peer feedback their own writing abilities improved more than the students who were using the feedback. Students who learned to give feedback were better in evaluating their own writing. Calkins (1986) observed peer conferences are effective for students because when students learn to question their peer's writing they are more likely to question their own texts.

Instruction is needed to support students involved in peer conferencing. Routman (2005) suggests successful peer conferences occur when students have observed many teacher-student conferences, learned how to ask thoughtful questions, received guided instruction in giving

feedback, been given teacher support during a peer conference, and finally had opportunities to engage independently in conferences. “We want to make sure our students know how to teach one another. We need to help them become lifelong teachers as well as learners,” (Johnston, 2012, p. 50). If listeners simply learn how to ask good questions during a peer conference they will be able to see their own writing differently and make revisions. Without instruction on how to listen for a writer’s weaknesses and modeling how to respond with suggestions, writers will have a difficult time making revisions following a conference (Harper, 1997).

A classroom structure that allows the opportunity to confer is also vital (Calkins, 2006). Teachers must demonstrate how to confer (Ray, 2001), how to be aware of the language and behaviors in responding to their peers (Routman, 2005), be given modeled examples of engaging their peer deeply, and making suggestions of substantial revisions not minor edits (Hsu, 2009). Some research suggests specific instructional techniques teachers can implement when preparing to teach students how to peer conference. Christensen (2002), as cited in Romeo (2008),

...recommends modeling, discussing, and using role playing for addressing certain topics such as students’ feelings about giving and receiving criticism and praise, the responsibilities of the peer at the conference, and ways to assist a peer in his writing efforts. (p. 37)

Anderson (2000) found that using the fishbowl model to conduct a student conference or coaching students engaging in a conference could help students understand the conferring process. He suggests teachers lead discussions on the topic to gauge student understanding and provide instruction as needed. Gillet and Beverly (2001) believe creating and displaying a list on how to be helpful during peer conferences, developed during whole group discussion, can benefit

students. Sadler (2003) suggests that when working with peers students should use a checklist to guide their conference. This allows students “concrete tasks and clear-cut goals,” (p. 22).

Lucy Calkins (1986) cautions teachers to be wary of placing too much emphasis on the skill of conferring when teaching peer conferencing because the conference can lose its authenticity. Students can begin to give rehearsed answers and act out a role rather than allowing the conference to be natural. Swaim (1998) found that the language he used during his mini-lessons on revision was filling his students’ peer conferences. Students seemed knowledgeable in the language, but not the process of revision resulting in students’ inability to respond authentically to peer writing. The revisions were less meaningful.

Romeo (2008) cautions when students are engaged in peer conferencing teachers must work to create a risk-free environment. This is important for all writers, especially those who struggle, because some may fear sharing their writing with peers. The best conferences with peers occur when the listener has an interest in the piece, shows appreciation for parts or ideas in the piece and gives suggestions rather than demands change. When the listener is inattentive, off-task, or bossy the conference is less impactful (Gillet & Beverly, 2001).

Collaboration is important to student learning and can benefit student writing. Teacher student conferences are the heart of the writing workshop, but class size can impact a teacher’s ability to meet all students’ needs. Peer conferencing is a solution for classroom teachers. Instruction must be provided and a risk-free, supportive environment must be established in order for students to experience success.



## Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected during this study. Qualitative data included analysis of transcribed audio recordings, student completed conference forms, student comments about conferences they participated in, and student writing revisions.

Some quantitative data was included in the analysis of the number and type of revisions students made in their writing, in analysis of specific transcribed conversations, and in analysis of forms that tracked conference helpfulness with a yes/no response and the purpose of the conference.

### Setting

**School.** Crestview (the school name is a pseudonym) is a large k-6 grade elementary school in a suburban community. During the 2010-2011 school year, 505 students were enrolled. Twelve percent of the student population received free or reduced lunch. Eighty-seven percent of the students were Caucasian, 6% Asian or Pacific Islander, 4% Hispanic, 3% African American, and less than 1% American Indian. One percent was English language learners and 10% received special education services.

**Classroom.** My class included 19 second grade students and one para-professional who was assigned to work one-on-one with a student. Two students had written IEPs. There were eleven boys and eight girls. Eighty-three percent of the students were Caucasian, 11 % were Asian or Pacific Islander and 6% were European/Chilean.

**Writing Workshop.** Writing workshop was conducted four days a week for 50 minutes with the first ten minutes spent on explicit instruction. This instruction included procedural lessons related to our workshop structure, lessons that focused on the writing process, mini-lessons related to our curriculum or student writing needs, modeled think alouds to show how I

made decisions as a writer, and read alouds of picture books (mentor texts) that prepared students for an upcoming writing lesson.

Following instruction, students were given seven to ten minutes of quiet writing time while classical music was played to provide a peaceful environment. Students spent this time reviewing developing pieces or preparing for a new piece. During this time I engaged in my own choice writing pieces.

Once the music was turned off, students continued working on their writing, but had choices. Students could be up moving around the room reading, talking, or collaborating. I emphasized that writers did not always work alone and valued their audiences' opinions and peer collaboration. Students also used materials in our writing center including pre-writing forms and revising, editing, and publishing supplies. During this time I moved around the room to conference individually with students. This workshop block lasted about 20 to 25 minutes.

I selected the students I conferred with in two ways. The first way was a student sign-up. Students were encouraged to sign-up for conferences when they needed help or wanted to share a piece of writing. The second way was through my records. I kept a binder with dated records for each student including notes on our conference and the student's writing needs and strengths. When I had not seen a student for a period of time I would check-in with them.

I conferred with students throughout the writing process because I found waiting until publishing slowed my writers down and I could not meet their needs in a timely manner. This method allowed me to recognize problem areas for the student in their current writing and provide instruction to support their current learning need.

The final five to ten minutes of our workshop was for authors' chair or a wrap up of our daily lesson. During authors' chair a few students shared their writing. Lesson wrap up directed

students back to their writing from that day and allowed students to share if our daily lesson had been applied.

Over the course of a month students worked on several different pieces of writing. They could abandon some pieces and complete others. At the end of each month students selected one piece to publish. This piece had been revised and edited by the student and often shared with a peer before publishing. Parent volunteers were utilized for publishing. The student dictated their writing to the volunteer who typed as it was read. Volunteers were only instructed to use correct writing conventions on the published copy. All pieces were printed and displayed on our classroom writing bulletin board, uploaded to our classroom wiki page, and placed in the student's portfolio.

**Peer Conferencing.** I introduced the topic of peer conferencing to my students prior to beginning my research. The early part of our school year we set up our writing workshop routines and expectation and began building stamina as writers. I emphasized that to be writers we must be readers. We used many authors to give us inspiration and called them our mentors. To broaden this concept we began to focus on ourselves as writers and our classmates as our mentors. As a class, we spent one day discussing how we could use our peers to help us as writers. Students determined that peers could help them generate ideas, make revisions, and even edit. Once this was established, I modeled two different conferences over two days. The first conference focused on planning a new writing idea (pre-writing conference). The second conference focused on making sure a section of writing made sense. As part of peer conferencing instruction I taught students how to show if revisions were done independently or as a result of their conference. If a change was made by the student independently blue ink was used. A change that occurred as a result of a peer conference suggestion was done in green ink. This

allowed me to track the changes in students writing as a result of their conference. After these days of instruction students decided that conferencing with peers would be helpful and demonstrated this by noting our classroom conference sign-up list did not always have an opening when needed. Thus began my study.

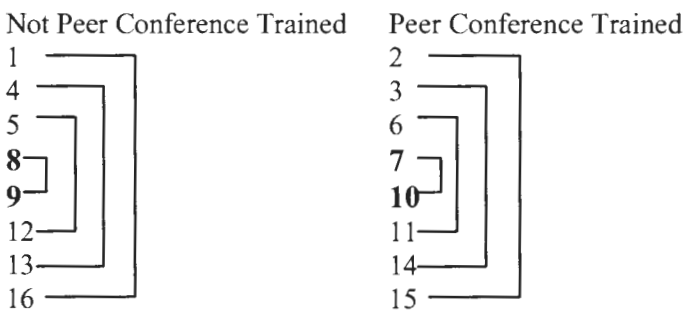
### **Participants**

My research design required that I identify where my students were as writers when the year began. This was important to my pairings for peer conferencing so that each group, peer-conference-trained and non-peer-conference-trained, had students with similar writing abilities. To ensure this I collected a writing sample from each student based on writing prompt I gave in September of 2010. I used a writing rubric (Appendix A) to score each student's writing and ranked the students from one (highest score) to nineteen (lowest score). I removed the lowest three scores because their writing was not at a level deemed appropriate for this study. I then divided the remaining sixteen students into two mixed ability groups (see Figure 1 for mixed ability peer conference grouping). One group was labeled peer-conference-trained and the other was labeled non-peer-conference-trained. I then used the student rankings to pair students within the peer-conference-trained group and students within the non-peer-conference-trained group. I used the same system of pairing students for each group. I took my highest writer in each group and matched them with the lowest writer in their group. I then took the second highest writer and matched them with the second lowest writer. I continued this process until each student had a peer partner (Figure 1). This resulted in four sets of partners per group. All students in the classroom were told they could only confer with their writing partner until after our holiday break in December.

Parent consent forms were sent home with all grouped students. Forms were returned to a colleague who then selected the two sets of partners from each group who would participate in my study. From there I selected only one partnership from the peer-trained group and one partnership from the non-peer trained group to report in my study. My colleague kept the consent forms until after the completion of the 2010-2011 school year. These steps were taken to meet IRB standards for participant protection.

Figure 1

*Peer Conference Partnership Pairings*



*Note. Bolded numbers represent the peer-conference-partnerships reported on in this study.*

**Training.** The trained peer conference group was provided instruction for ten days beginning on October 25, 2010, and ending on November 11, 2010. Instructional days were not always consecutive due to other school demands and student absences. Each peer conferencing group training session lasted ten minutes during our writing workshop block immediately following quiet writing time. While there was no outlined instructional model that I found to support my instructional progression, research supports the ideas of modeling conferences for students, teaching students to ask thoughtful questions, providing support during a peer conference, and allowing students to independently confer with student writers (Routman, 2005). In addition showing students how to listen to students writing and provide response is beneficial

in teaching students how to confer with peers (Harper, 1997). In my instruction the following topics were taught, modeled, discussed, and observed during our peer conference sessions:

- Taught: Definition and use of peer conferencing, the role of writer and listener during conferences, and how to question the writer
- Modeled: How to ask for and share purpose of a conference, conduct a conference as writer, participate as listener, ask questions of the writer, and the progression of a conference
- Discussed: Student definition of conferences, quality versus quantity of conferences, and student questions
- Coached, scaffolded, and observed three days of peer-conferences

### **Data Collection**

I utilized several types of data to address my research questions. These included (a) peer-conference reflection forms, (b) peer-conference audio recordings and (c) student writing folder and portfolio, (d) teacher reflective journal.

**Student Conference Reflection Forms.** Forms were filled out by a student after a peer conference session was finished. The writer requesting the conference was required to fill out the form. Conference reflection forms provided a written record of the conferences held between partners, shared the writer's purpose, and indicated if their peer was helpful in regards to the purpose of the conference. All forms were deposited in a bin in our writing center and collected by me at the end of each week (see Appendix B for an example of a completed form).

Student conference reflection forms were introduced to my class during a writing workshop lesson on October 11, 2010. I began collecting slips for my research on October 25,

2010. I continued to gather forms until March 11, 2011 because I was interested in how students who were peer-conference-trained continued to utilize conferencing. I was also interested if students who conferenced with trained students would perceive their conferences to have been more helpful than conferences with those who were not trained.

**Peer Conference Discourse Transcriptions.** Each writing partnership was required to record its peer conferences on audio recorders. Partnerships were provided their own digital voice recorder. It was stored in a bin in our classroom writing center, retrieved prior to each conference, and returned to the bin when their conference session was complete. Students were also required to note whose writing was being discussed, the title of their piece, and the purpose of the conference. Tracking their peer conferences on recording devices allowed me to determine the number of conferences each set of partners held and an opportunity to analyze their discussions.

I began the collection of peer conference recordings after all peer conference training was completed. Peer conference recordings were collected November 15, 2010 through December 17, 2010.

**Student Writing Samples.** I collected the students' writing at the end of the school year. Students submitted their entire writing folder which contained pre-writing forms and their writing journal. They also submitted their writing portfolio. This contained all published pieces and their rough drafts. My purpose in looking at their writing was to track the changes that were made to any piece of writing. I was able to determine which pieces had been written and conferenced over during the data collection period of November 15, 2010, through December 17, 2010, because of the audio peer conference transcriptions and a date stamp that was placed on

students work each day during our workshop time. I continued to collect student writing through March 2011 because I wanted additional writings samples available to study.

**Journal.** I kept a daily journal beginning on October 15, 2010, and ending on December 22, 2010. My daily recordings tracked my intended instructional plans for both large group writing and the peer conference training sessions, the enacted instructional lessons for each group, questions I had during the research process, observations of student writers and peer conferences, interactions among students, student responses to instruction or questions, and a daily reflection. Journaling allowed me to be a reflective practitioner. Some of my daily entries were relevant to my findings on peer conferencing.

## **Data Analysis**

**Student Conference Reflection Forms.** I began by reading all conference forms. I then sorted the forms into two piles. The yes pile indicated that the writer considered the conference to be helpful while the no pile indicated that the writer considered the conference to be unhelpful. This grouping helped me to distinguish if the peer-conference-trained students were more helpful during conferences than those students who were not peer-conference-trained.

I also looked at all conference reflection forms to note the purpose of the conference. I then coded all conference forms with the purpose the writer stated.

**Peer Conference Transcriptions.** After research concluded I listened to each recorded conference held by students. I typed their conversations, noted the date and length of each conference, and wrote a personal response. After all conferences were transcribed and my personal reflections were recorded, I reread each peer conference. In my rereading I noted if the writer directly stated the purpose for requesting the conference. I coded their conversations using themes according to what they were discussing and who was speaking, the writer or the



listener. Then I coded my personal responses using themes too. Finally, I compared the themes between the peer-conference and non-peer-conference trained groups as well as the writer from each group and the listener from each group.

**Student Writing.** I began by looking through each student's writing journal and portfolio to find pieces that had been worked on during November 2010 through March 2011. I identified the pieces using the peer conference audio recordings and the daily date stamp placed in their journal. Once all writing pieces were identified I went through each student's writing separately. I numbered each change in their writing, noted change according to type and analyzed the changes using themes. I then grouped them according to peer-conference or non-peer-conference-trained. Finally, I noted whether changes were made independently or with a peer partner. I was able to note these changes based on the color of ink the student used in their writing.

**Journal.** After the conclusion of my research project on December 22, 2010, I began to analyze the personal journal used during my study. I reread my journal several times, recording potential themes. I then looked at the potential themes, grouped ideas together, and determined six themes: Instruction, Questions, Response, Observations, Interactions and Reflection. Only the themes relevant to peer-conferencing will be explained below.

The theme of Instruction included: Instruction-what to teach and Instruction-what was taught. Instruction-what to teach tracked my intended writing instructional plan and it was determined prior to my study. It included notes in response to student needs for further clarifying revision strategies and how to peer-conference for those being trained. Instruction-what was taught tracked the enacted teachings that students received during my research. Such as was

what, how, when, and why writers revise, using different color pens for writing revisions, and utilizing questions to guide peers in conference for those being trained.

The theme of Questions included: Questions-researcher and Questions-student.

Questions-researcher was used when I had questions about student learning or my instruction.

Included was, *"I'm wondering about the frequency of peer-conference meetings? Should I require peer-conference meetings so I have data to analyze?"* Questions-student was used when I found record of student initiated questions. Included was, *"Can we revise a revision? I don't like my partner. Can I have a new one?"*

The theme of Observations included looking at students as writers during research. This included notes such as the correct use of colored pens for writing revisions and length of conferences between peer-conference-trained and non-peer-conference-trained students.

The theme of Interactions included: Interactions-student-to-student and Interactions-student-to-teacher. Interactions-student-to-student included observations during peer-conferences such as not valuing peers opinions because students don't care for their partner and strong co-construction to make changes to a piece of writing. Interactions-student-to-teacher included peer-conferencing instruction. An example would be my role in peer-conference-trained partnerships; acting as a ghost partner, whispering comments to help their peer's writing.

After coding themes, I typed my journal. Typing allowed me to organize it according to theme.

Results

Of the eight partnerships in my classroom during this study, only two pairs are being reported here. From the participating students, I collected and analyzed the following data, (1) peer-conference reflection forms, (2) peer-conference audio recordings, and (3) students’ writing folder and portfolio. All results are shown through a comparison of peer-conference-trained and non-peer-conference-trained. Raw scores for the analysis of student completed peer-conference reflection forms can be found in Table 1 and Table 2. Raw scores for the analysis of audio transcriptions of student discourse during peer-conferencing can be found in Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5. Finally, raw scores for the analysis of student writing can be found in Table 6.

Student Conference Reflection Forms

After completing a peer-conference, the student writer was instructed to complete a conference reflection form. The purpose of the form was to indicate whether the writer found the conference to be helpful. It also asked the writer to explain. Below, in Table 1, are the results of the conference reflection forms submitted by the two partnerships in my study.

Table 1

Peer Conference Reflection Form Helpfulness Results

	Not Helpful	Helpful	All submitted reflection forms
Peer-Conference-Trained	3	6	9
Non-Peer-Conference-Trained	2	9	11

Note. Completed peer-conference reflection form can be found in Appendix B.

**Peer-Conference-Trained.** In looking at the results of the conference reflection forms it appears that the peer-conference-trained students only conferred nine times. However, based on my conference transcription data, I have records of 19 conferences between this partnership. This indicates that students were not consistent in submitting their reflection forms. However, of the forms submitted six, or 67%, of the conferences were deemed helpful by the writer. On the other

hand, three, or 33%, of the conferences were deemed unhelpful by the writer. Due to the fact that ten conference reflection forms are missing from this pair, I would determine these results to be inconclusive.

**Non-Peer-Conference-Trained.** In looking at the results of the conference reflection forms it appears that the non-peer-conference-trained students only conferred 11 times. However, based on my conference transcription data I have record of 16 conferences between this pair. This indicated that students were not consistent in submitting their reflection forms. However, of the forms submitted nine, or 82%, of the conferences were deemed helpful. In contrast, two, or 18% of the conferences were found to be unhelpful. Similar to the peer-conference-trained partnership, I would determine these results to be inconclusive.

**Peer-Conference-Trained vs. Non-Peer-Conference-Trained.** While the results of Table 1 share only one out of the four peer-conference-trained partnerships and one out of the four non-peer-conference-trained partnerships, conference reflection forms were collected throughout the study from all partnerships. In looking at all four partnerships that were trained in peer-conferencing a total of 33 reflection forms were submitted. Of the 33 forms, 27, or 82%, were found to be helpful, while six, or 18%, were found to be unhelpful. In comparison, the non-peer-conference-trained partnerships also submitted 33 conference forms. They found 22, or 67%, to be helpful and 11, or 33%, to be unhelpful.

**After the Study.** During this study students were only allowed to meet with the partner they were assigned. Out of curiosity I continued to collect conference reflection forms through March. This allowed me to track whether students considered peer-conference-trained students more helpful than non-peer-conference-trained students. I found that a total of 71 conference reflection forms were submitted where a peer-conference-trained student was the listening

partner for the writer. Out of those conferences 60, or 85%, of the conferences were considered helpful. Only 11, or 15%, were considered unhelpful.

I found that a total of 65 conference reflection forms were submitted where a non-peer-conference-trained student was the listening partner for the writer. Out of those conferences 48, or 79%, were considered helpful, and 17, or 21%, were considered unhelpful. I also found that out of all the conference forms submitted from October through March, 54% of the conferences were called by writers who were trained to peer-conference and 46% of the conferences were called by writers who were not trained to peer-conference.

Below, in Table 2, are the results of the peer-conference purpose. These results were obtained by coding student's reflection forms based on the writer's explanation of the conference or by listening to the audio recordings between the partnerships. Identifying the purpose of the conference helped me understand how students viewed the purpose of conferring with a peer.

Table 2

*Peer Conference Purpose Results*

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Peer-Conference-Trained</b>	<b>Non-Peer-Conference-Trained</b>
Ideas for New Piece	2	1
Pre-Write Help	7	0
Drafting Ideas	2	5
Revision	8	3
Read Story	0	7

*Note. Definitions of peer-conference purpose can be found in Appendix C.*

The data indicates that the partnership trained to peer-conference met two times for help determining an idea for a new piece of writing whereas the non-peer-conference-trained partnership only met once. The peer-conference-trained partnership met seven times to get help with an idea they already had, but wanted guidance on the planning of their piece of writing. The non-peer-conference-trained partnership had no conferences for this purpose. The peer-conference-trained partnership held two conferences for the purpose of getting ideas while they

were drafting compared to the non-peer-conference-trained partnership held five conferences for this purpose. Eight conferences were held by the peer-conference-trained partnership with the idea that revisions needed to be made to writing. However, only three conferences were called by the non-peer-conference-trained partnership for this purpose. Finally, the peer-conference-trained students called no conferences for the purpose of simply sharing their writing by reading it aloud to their partner. However, the non-peer-conference-trained partnership called seven conferences to simply read their writing aloud.

### **Peer Conference Discourse Transcriptions**

Once the study concluded, I listened to all of the conferences held by the peer-conference-trained and non-peer-conference-trained partnerships. I noted whether the writers shared a purpose with their partners that indicated their need, or reason, to confer. These results can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

#### *Peer Conference Purpose Shared with Peer during Conference Results*

<b>Peer Conference Purpose Shared with Peer</b>		
	<b>Peer-Conference-Trained</b>	<b>Non-Peer-Conference-Trained</b>
<b>Purpose Stated</b>	15	6
<b>Purpose Not Stated</b>	4	10

After listening and transcribing their conversational discourse, I coded their conversations. I analyzed the data by comparing the responses of the writers, students requesting a conference, and the listeners, those students being asked to confer, in both the peer-conference-trained and the non-peer-conference-trained. In Table 4 and Table 5 below are the results of the peer-conference discourse transcription analysis.



In listening to all of the recorded conferences between both partnerships, I noted that the writer did not always state the purpose, or reason, for the conference (see Table 3 above). Of the 19 conferences held between the peer-conference-trained partnership, the writer stated the purpose of the conference 15 times, or 79%, of the time. In contrast, of the 16 conferences held between the non-peer-conference-trained partnership the writer stated the purpose only six times, or 38%, of the time.

**Writer Responses.** I found four different response themes in the writers' conversations with their partner: (1) clarifying responses, (2) accepting responses, (3) questioning responses, and (4) rejecting responses. I also found several writer responses that were miscellaneous responses. A total of 15 response types were noted.

Table 4

*Peer Conference Discourse Transcription Analysis of the Writer Results*

<b>Writer Responses</b>	
<b>Peer-Conference-Trained</b>	<b>Non-Peer-Conference-Trained</b>
<b>Clarifying Responses</b>	
Response-Clarify Ideas= 9	Response-Clarify Ideas= 16
Response-Clarify Writing= 17	Response-Clarify Writing= 0
<b>Accepting Responses</b>	
Accepts Suggestion (revision)= 10	Accepts Suggestion (revision)= 0
Accepts Suggestion (idea)= 12	Accepts Suggestion (idea)= 7
<b>Questioning Responses</b>	
Question-Ideas= 24	Question-Ideas= 9
Question-Make sense= 5	Question-Makes sense= 4
Question-Peer support/thoughts= 10	Question-Peer support/thoughts= 1
<b>Rejecting Responses</b>	
Rejects Suggestion (revision)= 3	Rejects Suggestion (revision)= 0
Rejects Suggestion (ideas)= 22	Rejects Suggestion (ideas)= 14
<b>Miscellaneous Responses</b>	
Self-Corrects Writing (during conf.)= 2	Self-Corrects Writing (during conf.)= 1
Think/Consider/Spark Idea= 4	Think/Consider/Spark Idea= 6
Off-Task= 4	Off-Task= 37
Redirects Conference= 0	Redirects Conference= 17
Frustrated= 0	Frustrated= 1
Just read piece/Share ideas= 0	Just read piece/Share ideas= 7

*Note. Definitions of peer-conference Writer Response types can be found in Appendix D.*

When looking at the clarifying response data, students who were trained in peer-conferencing were more likely to make statements that clarified their writing or thinking. These responses were made based on a question from their partner that indicated a need for clarification of their writing or an idea that had been shared. Students trained to peer-conference made 26 responses to clarify something for their listener as compared to 16 responses made by students not trained to peer-conference. Within this response theme, the partnership trained in peer-conferencing had 17 responses to clarify their writing. The partnership not trained in peer-conferencing had no responses of this nature.

The accepting responses data indicates that students who were trained in peer-conferencing accepted 22 suggestions from their partner while those students who were not trained in peer-conferencing accepted seven suggestions from their partner. This data also shows peer-conference-trained students accept suggestions for revisions as compared to the non-peer-conference-trained partnership, which had no accepting revision responses.

Similarly, the questioning response data also indicates that students who were trained in peer-conferencing asked their partner more questions than those who were not trained. The peer-conference-trained partnership asked a total of 39 questions for the purpose of collecting ideas, revising, or peer approval. The non-peer-conference-trained partnership asked a total of 14 questions for the purpose of collecting ideas, revising, or peer approval. Both partnerships seemed equally likely to ask their listener if their writing made sense, but the peer-conference-trained partnership was more likely to ask questions seeking suggestions from the listener.

The rejecting response data, on the other hand, indicates that students who were trained to peer-conference were more likely to reject a suggestion made by their partner. The peer-



conference-trained partnership rejected 25 suggestions compared to the non-peer-conference-trained partnership where 14 suggestions were rejected.

Finally, the partnership trained to peer-conference had four responses that were considered to be off-task and no responses were made in an effort to redirect the conference back on task. However, the partnership that was not trained to peer-conference had 37 responses that were considered to be off-task and 17 responses that were made in an effort to redirect the conference back on task.

**Listener Responses.** I found two different response themes in the listener's conversations with their partner: (1) questioning responses and (2) suggesting responses. I also found several listener responses that were miscellaneous responses. A total of 10 response types were noted.

Table 5

*Peer Conference Discourse Transcription Analysis of the Listener Results*

<b>Listener Responses</b>	
<b>Peer-Conference-Trained</b>	<b>Non-Peer-Conference-Trained</b>
<b>Questioning Response</b>	
Question to help w/ Ideas= 7	Question to help w/ Ideas= 0
Question for Conf. Purpose= 0	Question for Conf. Purpose= 1
Question to Clarify= 25	Question to Clarify= 20
<b>Suggesting Response</b>	
Suggestion (clarify/revise)= 11	Suggestion (clarify/revise)= 0
Suggests (edits)= 0	Suggests (edits)= 1
Suggestion (ideas)= 38	Suggestion (ideas)= 36
<b>Miscellaneous Response</b>	
Reinforces Writer Thoughts= 6	Reinforces Writer Thoughts= 2
Off Task= 1	Off-Task= 39
Redirects= 0	Redirects= 7
Gives Up/Frustrated= 2	Gives Up/Frustrated= 12

*Note. Definitions of peer-conference Listener Response types can be found in Appendix D.*

The questioning responses data suggests the listener in the peer-conference-trained partnership is more likely to ask questions of their partner. This is indicated in the results that students trained to peer-conference asked 32 questions of their partner where students not trained to peer-conference asked 21 questions. Questions were asked by the listener to help the writer with ideas, to gain understanding for the purpose of the conference, or to clarify something said by the writer.

The listener data for suggesting responses again indicates that those trained to peer-conference are more likely to make suggestions to their partner than students not trained to peer-conference. According to the results, peer-conference-trained students made 49 suggestions to the writer. The non-peer-conference-trained partner made 37 suggestions. A significant difference in the suggesting responses can be noted in the number of suggested clarifications or revisions. The partnership that was trained in peer-conferencing made 11 suggestions of this nature whereas the partnership that was not trained to peer-conference made no suggestions of this nature. However both partnerships seem equally likely to suggest ideas.

Finally, when looking at the miscellaneous responses it can be noted that the partnership trained to peer-conference had one response that was considered to be off-task and no responses that were in an effort to redirect the conference back on task. However, the partnership not trained to peer-conference had 39 responses that were considered to be off-task and seven responses that were made in an effort to redirect the conference back on task. In both partnerships listeners gave responses that suggested a frustration with their partner and a desire to end the conference. However, the peer-conference-trained partnership had only two of these responses compared to the non-peer-conference-trained partnership that had 12 responses.

## Student Writing Samples

At the end of the school year I collected both partnerships' writing portfolio and writing folder. This allowed me to analyze the changes made to their writing. I waited to collect these materials until the end of the year because students needed access to them daily during our writing workshop. I was able to determine which pieces were written and changed during my study because of the date stamp that was placed on their work each day. I was also able to use the audio recorded conferences to determine writing that was conferenced over because partnerships were required to share a title for their piece of writing each time they met.

To note changes made to writing during the study I looked for blue pen markings. Students were instructed to use blue pen to make any change to their writing that they determined necessary on their own (independent changes). I also looked for green pen marks which indicated a change was made based on a conference with their partner (peer-influenced changes). After identifying all of the changes made with blue and green pen, I coded the types of revisions made and noted if they made the revision on their own or with the help of their partner. The results are listed below in Table 6.

I found three major themes when I coded each student's writing, (1) revisions, (2) ideas, and (3) edits. In all I noted nine different changes that students made to their writing.

Table 6

*Student Writing Analysis Results*

Peer-Conference-Trained		Non-Peer-Conference-Trained	
Revision			
Type of Change	Frequency	Type of Change	Frequency
Clarify Written Idea	18	Clarify Written Idea	21
Word Choice	10	Word Choice	8
Sentence Fluency (structure)	0	Sentence Fluency (structure)	1
Insertions/Additions		Insertions/Additions	
Detail/Idea	30	Detail/Idea	23
Word	10	Word	0
Deletions		Deletions	
Idea	12	Idea	4
Word	21	Word	0
Ideas			
Idea (no change. just help with pre-write)	9	Idea (no change, just help with pre-write)	1
Edits			
Punctuation/Spelling/Capitals	10	Punctuation/Spelling/Capitals	8
Totals			
Total Revisions	101	Total Revisions	65
Total Ideas	9	Total Ideas	1
Total Edits	10	Total Edits	8
Total Changes Overall	120	Total Changes Overall	74
Peer-Influenced Changes-23	Independent Changes-97	Peer-Influenced Changes-8	Independent Changes-66

**Revision.** The first section of the data on revisions (Table 6) is labeled “Type of Change”. I found students made changes to their writing for three reasons. One was to clarify ideas they had already written. A second was to improve word choice. The final reason students made changes was to improve sentence fluency. According to the data, both the peer-conference-trained and non-peer-conference-trained partnerships used revision for the purpose of changing ideas they had already written.

The second section of the data on revisions is labeled “Insertions/Additions”. Students inserted, or added, things to their writing for two reasons. The first was to add new ideas or

details to their already written text. These insertions and additions were coded when the student added several words or sentences to their writing; if a student added only a single word, it was coded in the word category. The data indicates that both the conference-trained and non-conference-trained students' added details and/or ideas to their writing, however peer-conference-trained students had 30 additions to their writing while the non-peer-conference-trained made 23 additions. When it came to adding a word, peer-conference-trained students seem more likely to make these types of insertions. Peer-conference-trained students inserted ten words compared to no added words by the non-peer-conference-trained students.

The final section of the data on revisions is labeled "Deletions" for the purpose of clarifying their intended message. I found students made deletions for two reasons. The first was to delete an idea from something they had already written. These deletions were coded when the student deleted multiple words or sentences. The second was to delete words. These deletions were coded if the student simply deleted a single word from their writing. The data indicates that students who are trained to peer-conference are more likely to delete material from their writing. These students made a total of 33 deletions. Students not trained to peer-conference made a total of four deletions in their writing.

**Ideas.** The Idea theme was used to code ideas students used in their writing that came from their partner as a result of a conference. These were not coded as revisions because students conferred to get ideas on a pre-write or were stuck in their current writing draft and needed an idea to proceed. According to the data, students who were peer-conference-trained were more likely to ask their partner for help with ideas. Peer-conference-trained students had nine recordings of using a peer's idea for a pre-write or draft compared to the non-peer-conference-trained partnership which recorded only one conference that resulted in utilizing an idea.

**Editing.** The editing theme was used to code when students made changes in writing conventions to their writing. Editing tended to focus primarily on correctly using punctuation marks and capitalization. The data indicates that both peer-conference-trained and non-peer-conference-trained students are willing to edit their writing.

**Totals.** Overall, totals for the writing analysis data suggest that students who are peer-conference-trained are more likely to make changes to their writing. This is evident in looking at the overall total changes. Students that were peer-conference-trained made a total of 120 changes to their writing. Students who were not trained made 74 overall changes to their writing. Also, looking at the total revisions data, students trained to peer-conference made a total of 101 revisions to their writing compared to students who were not trained having a total of 65 revisions.

Finally, while the partnership that was peer-conference-trained did make more changes overall to their writing; the partnership that was not peer-conference-trained was more likely to make changes independently. Peer-conference trained students made 81% of their changes independently, while students who were not peer-conference-trained made 90% of changes independently. Students who received the peer-conference-training were more likely to make changes to their writing as a result of a peer-conference. Peer-conference-trained students made 19% of their changes as a result of a conference in contrast to students who were not peer-conference-trained who made 10% of their changes as a result of a peer-conference.

## Conclusions

After the data analysis was completed, I began to look for similarities and differences between students who were trained to peer-conference and students who were not trained to peer-conference. Looking for similarities and differences helped me to draw conclusions based on my research questions. The findings of these conclusions are shared below.

Question one examined whether instruction and modeling of peer-conferencing was beneficial, and if so how. Based on the conclusions drawn from the data, instruction and modeling of peer-conferencing is beneficial. This was determined by looking at multiple data points from my study.

The conference reflection forms (Table 1) suggest inconclusive data as students did not consistently submit forms. However, the data I did collect indicates that modeling and instruction were beneficial. This can be determined by considering the total number of forms submitted during the study. Partnerships trained in peer-conferencing felt that 82% of their conferences were helpful compared to 67% of the partnerships not peer-conference trained. If a student deems a conference helpful, it suggests a correlation between instruction and modeling and its benefits. In addition, the conference reflection forms collected from October-March suggest that partnerships who were peer-conference trained called 11% more of the total conferences. This indicates that students who were peer-conference trained felt that conferring with a peer was beneficial to their writing.

When looking at the purpose, or reason, a student called a conference (Table 2), the data suggests modeling and instruction are beneficial to the partnership trained in peer-conferencing. The partnership trained in peer-conferencing only met for the purpose of collecting ideas and considering potential revisions to be made in their writing. The partnership that was not trained in peer-conferencing met most frequently to simply read a piece of writing they were drafting.

This implies a lack of understanding behind why writers chose to confer. In addition, the partnership that was peer-conference-trained shared the purpose of the conference with the listening partner 79% of the time. The partnership that was not peer-conference-trained shared the purpose of the conference with the listening partner only 38% of the time (Table 3). While this difference is significant, I believe a correlation can be drawn to the number of times off-task conversation occurred during a conference. The partnership that was trained in peer-conferencing had a total of five off-task comments during conferences. This differs dramatically from the partnership that was not trained in peer-conferencing. They had a total of 76 off-task comments during their conferences. This data implies a strong connection to the benefits of instruction and modeling of peer-conferencing and on-task behavior.

Interestingly, a study conducted by Styslinger (2008) found gender can play a role in how a partnership works together. In my study the peer-conference-trained partnership was a male-female partnership. The partnership that was not peer-conference-trained was a female-female partnership. Styslinger (2008) found peer revision to be useful, but it can be impacted by the partnership's gender. She found female-female partnerships may be more concerned with their peer relationship, trying to please their partner rather than consider the writer's needs. In addition, she found female-female partnerships also incorporate more off-task, or superficial, conversation into their conferences. Styslinger's research may have a confounding effect on the results of my study, and it suggests an area for further investigation.

Other conversations between both partnerships suggest instruction and modeling to be beneficial. The writer and listener responses found in Tables 4 and 5 suggest that writers who are trained in peer-conferencing are more likely to clarify their thinking for their partner, accept suggestions, and ask questions of their partner when compared to the writer not trained in peer-



conferencing. The same can be said about the listener responses from the peer-conference-trained partnership. Peer-conference-trained listeners were more likely to question the writer and offer suggestions implying that peer-conference training is beneficial to both the writer and the listener in the partnership.

The final data suggesting that instruction and modeling of peer-conferencing is beneficial can be noted in the overall changes both partnerships made to their writing. Students trained in peer-conferencing made a total of 120 changes to their writing compared to the 74 changes made by the non-peer-conferenced trained partnership. This is a difference of 46 more changes made by students trained in peer-conferencing. This suggests a benefit to instruction and modeling of peer-conferencing as all classroom students received the same instruction on revision, but not all students received peer-conference-training.

Question two examined whether 2<sup>nd</sup> graders trained to peer-conference find conferencing helpful, and if so why. After looking through all conference reflection forms, it can be determined that peer-conference-trained partnerships found conferring helpful. Students who were trained in peer-conferencing called more conferences, implying the trained partnership found conferring helpful to their writing process. Additionally, my own curiosities led me to continue the collection of conferring reflection forms beyond the original dates of the study. I found that even after the study had concluded, students who were trained in peer-conferencing called more conferences, were more likely to view their conference as helpful, and if a peer-conference-trained student was the listening partner, were more likely to have a helpful rating from the writer. This supports the conclusion that students trained in peer-conferencing, and also students who conferred with a student trained in peer-conferencing, were more likely to deem the conference helpful.

Finally, question three examined if 2<sup>nd</sup> graders trained to peer-conference use their conference experiences to help them revise their own writing, and if so how. After looking at both partnerships' writing samples, it can be concluded that peer-conference training does affect revisions to student's own writing (Table 6). The partnership trained in peer-conferencing made a total of 101 revisions while the partnership not trained in peer-conferencing only made 65 revisions. This is a difference of 36 revisions made, suggesting that peer-conferencing does help students revise.

Upon closer review of the data it should be noted that both partnerships had nearly equal numbers of revisions where they changed their writing by clarifying a written idea, changed a word, or changed the structure of a sentence. However, when looking at the data on insertions and deletions, students trained in peer-conferencing made a total of 73 revisions and students not trained in peer-conferencing only made 27 revisions. This suggests peer-conference-training impacts inserting and deleting words and ideas in students' writing.

Students trained in peer-conferencing did make more overall revisions to their writing. They were also more likely to make a change as a result of a conference. Students trained in peer-conferencing made 23 revisions based on a conference suggesting they are considering their partner's suggestions and questions for clarity in their writing. That students who were trained in peer-conferencing made more overall revisions to their writing also suggests peer-conferencing made them more aware of their audience in constructing their intended message. If the revision data is compared with the student discourse data it could be implied that a correlation exists between their conversations and their revisions. However, further analysis and research of this data would be needed in order to identify the specific indicators.

In addition to the Tables used to represent data analysis, my personal journal did offer some insight into another generalization from this study. Student partnerships and rapport can play a role in the number and quality of conferences between students. In one particular partnership I recorded several comments made to me about disliking the partner and asking to meet with other students. In another instance, a student actually told me they did not like their partner or their ideas. This indicates peer relationships are important to students when conferring. Peer conferences do not work without trust between peers, (Atwell, 1998).

### **Summary**

The results of this study support the following conclusions:

1. In order for peer conferencing to be successful, students need to be provided instruction on how to confer with peers. In addition, students need to observe modeled conferences. Instruction and modeling allow students to identify the structure and expectation of peer-conferences.
2. Students trained in peer-conferencing are more helpful to peers than those not trained in peer-conferencing. They are also more likely to deem conferring helpful to their own writing process.
3. Students trained in peer-conferencing have conversations that are more on-task and relevant to their writing purpose. They also experience more enriched conversations about their writing pieces.
4. Students trained in peer-conferencing are more likely to make revisions to their writing, both independently, and as a result of the conference.

## **Recommendations**

These findings support the implementation of peer-conferencing instruction as part of the writing workshop. However, the data cannot be generalized across a larger population or multiple grade levels. One limitation of this study is the small sample size representing only one partnership that was peer-conference-trained and one partnership that was not peer-conference-trained. Therefore, these findings should be interpreted within the larger body of research that supports instruction in writing. A second limitation was the assigned partnerships. Questions of interpersonal compatibility and gender may have had confounding effects on the results. As mentioned previously, research has suggested that both of these factors might alter the nature and content of peer conferences.

Future studies may include various grade levels, multiple partnerships, and a balance of same gender and mix gender pairings. A comparison across schools in order to determine consistency of the findings reported in this study would also be helpful. Future studies would provide more evidence on the potential benefits of instruction on peer-conferencing and its impact on students' writing. While minimal research is currently available, this study suggests a continuation of this instructional approach would be valuable.

## **Discussion**

It has been two years since my study concluded. I now teach fourth grade in the same school and have many of the same students I had as second graders. I still utilize the writing workshop model and peer-conferencing has become the norm in my classroom. The results of my study and student/parent feedback have supported my decision to continue its implementation. When the 2011-2012 school year began, a parent from the previous year sought me out at school to inform me her child missed conferring with her teacher and peers. She shared

with me that on numerous occasions her child had expressed a desire to be able to talk with classmates during writing because help was needed. This kind of anecdotal evidence offers more support for the conclusions I have reached based on my research data.

I have found my students to be an invaluable resource in my classroom in improving students' writing. I approach the teaching of writing with my students by helping them to understand that we are all writers and can benefit from each other's knowledge. Students take pride in the responsibility of helping their peers grow as writers and in return they help me with the time demands that quality writing instruction requires.

While peer-conferencing still plays a large role in my writing workshop, I have made modifications based on what I learned from my research. My biggest change is modeling a variety of conferences for my students. From data I collected during my study, I learned students desire conferences for more than the purpose of revising their writing. In addition to revising, they wanted help generating ideas, developing pre-writes, orally sharing their ideas to help with drafting, and editing pieces they wished to publish. Considering all of these purposes for conferring, I began to model a variety of conferences for my students. In addition, I began to emphasize that not all writing is worth conferencing. Writers confer when they have an idea or piece they feel is worth the investment of time. I have also learned modeling has to come from two perspectives, the writer and the listener. Students need to see a conference conducted from both points of view so they have an understanding of the expectations involved. I have continued to use the student reflection form. However, where I previously viewed it as a way to hold the writer accountable for the conference, I have now found it also helps me identify needs my students have as writers. I use them for guiding instructional purposes too.

This study has made me a better teacher. I never underestimate the power of modeling as a form of teaching and talking as way of learning. I also embrace students as teachers in my classroom and I often express this to them. As a teacher of writing, I am still learning and growing. Fletcher and Portalupi, (2001) were correct. Teaching writing is hard. It is challenging, even uncomfortable, at times, but the challenge is welcomed. I am determined to devote time to writing instruction, conferencing, and sharing. I am determined to help my students find a passion for writing. I am determined to make writing become the revived “r” in my classroom.

I entered teaching to change the lives of my students. I may never know how I impact my students, but I am confident I am helping address the problem the National Commission on Writing for America’s Families, Schools, and Colleges presented in their 2006 report. Student writing is a major concern and students do need a plethora of writing skills in order to find success in school, college, and life. My growth as a teacher has me providing writing instruction in the many facets of writing. I feel confident that I am no longer telling my students to write, but I am teaching them how to do it well.

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## Appendix A

6+1 Traits® Condensed 5-Point 3-12 Writer's Rubric aka One Pager

<p><b>Ideas:</b> The main message of the piece, the theme, with supporting details that enrich and develop that theme.</p> <p>① <i>This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.</i></p> <p>A. The topic is narrow and manageable B. Relevant, telling, quality details go beyond the obvious C. Ideas are crystal clear and supported with details D. Writing from knowledge or experience; ideas are fresh and original E. Reader's questions are anticipated and answered F. Insightful topic</p>	<p><b>Organization:</b> The internal structure, thread of central meaning, logical and sometimes intriguing pattern or sequence of the ideas.</p> <p>② <i>The organizational structure of this paper enhances and showcases the central idea or theme of the paper; includes a catchy introduction and a satisfying conclusion.</i></p> <p>A. An inviting introduction draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution B. Thoughtful transitions connect ideas C. Sequencing is logical and effective D. Pacing is well controlled E. The title, if desired, is original F. Organizational structure is appropriate for purpose and audience; paragraphing is effective</p>	<p><b>Voice:</b> The unique perspective of the writer evident in the piece through the use of compelling ideas, engaging language, and revealing details.</p> <p>③ <i>The writer of this paper speaks directly to the reader in a manner that is individual, compelling, engaging, and shows respect for the audience.</i></p> <p>A. Uses topic, details, and language to strongly connect with the audience B. Purpose is reflected by content and arrangement of ideas C. The writer takes a risk with revealing details D. Expository or persuasive reflects understanding and commitment to topic E. Narrative writing is honest, personal, and engaging</p>
<p>④ <i>The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.</i></p> <p>A. The topic is broad B. Support is attempted C. Ideas are reasonably clear D. Writer has difficulty going from general observations about topic to specifics E. The reader is left with questions F. The writer generally stays on topic</p>	<p>⑤ <i>The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion.</i></p> <p>A. The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion B. Transitions sometimes work C. Sequencing shows some logic, yet structure takes attention away from the content D. Pacing is fairly well controlled E. A title, if desired, is present F. Organizational structure sometimes supports the main point or story line, with an attempt at paragraphing</p>	<p>⑥ <i>The writer seems sincere, but not fully engaged or involved. The result is pleasant or even personable, but not compelling.</i></p> <p>A. Attempt to connect with audience is earnest but impersonal B. Attempts to include content and arrangement of ideas to reflect purpose C. Occasionally reveals personal details, but avoids risk D. Expository or persuasive writing lacks consistent engagement with the topic E. Narrative writing reflects limited individual perspective</p>
<p>⑦ <i>The paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. The reader must make inferences based on sketchy or missing details.</i></p> <p>A. The writer is still in search of a topic B. Information is limited or unclear or the length is not adequate for development C. The idea is a simple restatement or a simple answer to the question D. The writer has not begun to define the topic E. Everything seems as important as everything else F. The topic may be repetitious, disconnected, and contains too many random thoughts</p> <p><b>Key Question:</b> Did the writer stay focused and share original and fresh information or perspective about the topic?</p>	<p>⑧ <i>The writing lacks a clear sense of direction.</i></p> <p>A. No real lead or conclusion present B. Connections between ideas, if present, are confusing C. Sequencing needs work D. Pacing feels awkward E. No title is present (if requested) F. Problems with organizational structure make it hard for the reader to get a grip on the main point or story line. Little or no evidence of paragraphing present.</p> <p><b>Key Question:</b> Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make it easier to understand?</p>	<p>⑨ <i>The writer seems uninvolved with the topic and the audience.</i></p> <p>A. Fails to connect with the audience B. Purpose is unclear C. Writing is risk free, with no sense of the writer D. Expository or persuasive writing is mechanical, showing no engagement with the topic E. Narrative writing lacks development of a point of view.</p> <p><b>Key Question:</b> Would you keep reading this piece if it were longer?</p>

6+1 Traits® Condensed 5-Point 3-12 Writer's Rubric aka One Pager

<p><b>Word Choice:</b> The use of rich, colorful, and precise language that moves and enlightens the reader.</p>	<p><b>Sentence Fluency:</b> The rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which the writing plays to the ear, not just to the eye.</p>	<p><b>*Conventions:</b> The mechanical correctness of the piece; spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and paragraphing.</p>
<p>Ⓐ Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way.</p> <p>A. Words are specific and accurate. B. Striking words and phrases create imagery. C. Natural, effective and appropriate language. D. Lively verbs, specific nouns and modifiers. E. Language enhances and clarifies meaning. F. Precision is obvious by choice of words and phrases.</p>	<p>Ⓐ The writing has an easy flow, rhythm and cadence. Sentences are well constructed.</p> <p>A. Sentences enhance the meaning. B. Sentences vary in length as well as structure. C. Purposeful and varied sentence beginnings. D. Creative and appropriate connectives. E. The writing has cadence.</p>	<p>Ⓐ The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, paragraphing)</p> <p>A. Spelling is generally correct. B. Punctuation is accurate. C. Capitalization skills are present. D. Grammar and usage are correct. E. Paragraphing tends to be sound. F. The writer may manipulate and/or edit for stylistic effect, and it works!</p>
<p>Ⓑ The language is functional, even if it lacks much energy.</p> <p>A. Words are adequate and correct in a general sense. B. Familiar words and phrases communicate. C. Attempts at colorful language. D. Passive verbs, everyday nouns, mundane modifiers. E. Language functions, with one or two fine moments. F. Occasionally, the words and phrases show refinement and precision.</p>	<p>Ⓑ The text hums along with a steady beat, but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical.</p> <p>A. Sentences get the job done in a routine fashion. B. Sentences are usually of similar length, yet constructed correctly. C. Sentence beginnings are sometimes varied. D. The reader sometimes has to hunt for connective clues. E. Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading; other parts may be stiff, awkward, choppy, or gangly.</p>	<p>Ⓑ The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions</p> <p>A. Spelling is usually correct or reasonably phonetic on common words. B. End punctuation is usually correct. C. Most capitalized words are correct. D. Problems with grammar and usage are not serious. E. Paragraphing is attempted. F. Moderate, inconsistent editing (a little of this, a little of that).</p>
<p>Ⓒ The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary</p> <p>A. Words are nonspecific or distracting. B. Many of the words don't work. C. Language is used incorrectly. D. Limited vocabulary, misuse of parts of speech. E. Language is unimaginative and lifeless. F. Jargon or clichés, persistent redundancy.</p> <p><b>Key Question:</b> Do the words and phrases create vivid pictures and linger in your mind?</p>	<p>Ⓒ The reader has to practice quite a bit in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading.</p> <p>A. Sentences are choppy, incomplete, rambling, or awkward. Phrasing does not sound natural. B. No "sentence sense" present. C. Sentences begin the same way. D. Endless connectives, if any present. E. Writing does not invite expressive oral reading.</p> <p><b>Key Question:</b> Can you FEEL the words and phrases flow together as you read it aloud?</p>	<p>Ⓒ Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage and grammar and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make text difficult to read.</p> <p>A. Spelling errors are frequent. B. Punctuation missing or incorrect. C. Capitalization is random. D. Errors in grammar or usage are very noticeable. E. Paragraphing is missing. F. Little, if any editing; the reader must read once to decode, then again for meaning.</p> <p><b>Key Question:</b> How much editing would have to be done to be ready to share with an outside source?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A whole lot? Score in the 1-2 range.</li> <li>• A moderate amount? Score in the 3 range.</li> <li>• Very little? Score in the 4-5 range.</li> </ul>
<p><i>*Expectations for Conventions should be based on grade level and include only those skills that have actually been taught.</i></p>		

## Appendix B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

## Writing Conference Reflection Form

Was your writing conference helpful to you today? ☒ Yes

No

Please explain why?

She helped me  
get a idea to put a new  
starting

today Nov 9, 2010.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

## Writing Conference Reflection Form

Was your writing conference helpful to you today? ☒ Yes

No

Please explain why?

becusa he help me with  
my Beging and if a part in my  
writting he told me if it  
Sents are ~~he~~ said no and He make  
He help me.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

## Writing Conference Reflection Form

Was your writing conference helpful to you today? Yes

No

Please explain why?

He did not help me  
anything I asked.

## Appendix C

### Peer Conference Purpose

**Idea for a new piece:** These conferences were called by the writer because they were ready to begin work on a new piece of writing. They were seeking support from their partner in helping them generate a new writing idea.

**Pre-write help:** These conferences were called by the writer because they needed help with a pre-write they were working on. Students utilized pre-writing as a way to help plan a draft.

**Drafting ideas:** These conferences were called by the writer because they needed help with their draft. These conferences were common among students who were stuck in their writing and wanted support for ideas so they could continue their writing draft.

**Revision:** These conferences were called by the writer for the purpose of revising. They were looking for support from their partner to ensure their writing made sense. It often resulted in changes to words and ideas, inserting new words or ideas, or deleting words or ideas that were determined to be unnecessary.

**Read story:** These conferences were called by the writer for the sole purpose of reading their writing. They were not seeking any feedback or support. It was an opportunity to share with an audience.

## Appendix D

### Writer Responses:

**Accepts Suggestion (idea):** The writer accepted an idea suggestion made by the listener. These suggestions were made prior to a piece being started (pre-write conference) OR if the writer was stuck in the middle of their piece and needed ideas.

**Accepts Suggestion (revision):** The writer accepted a revision suggestion made by the listener. These suggestions were made after a piece was started and the listener offered suggestions about ways to improve or clarify writing.

**Frustrated:** These comments made by writer show frustration with the listener or the direction the conference is going.

**Just read piece/Share ideas:** These conferences were called by the writer where all they did was read a piece they were working on OR sharing ideas without the intent to take suggestions from listener.

**Off-Task:** Comments made by the writer were off-topic. They were unrelated to writing or their conference purpose. They were often more socializing or being silly. It could be interactions with the listener or other peers in the classroom.

**Question (idea):** The writer asked questions of the listener because they were seeking ideas. They could be seeking ideas for a pre-write OR during drafting if they were stuck or wanted help with revisions.

**Question (make sense):** The writer asked the listener to pay attention to their writing to make sure that their writing made sense.

**Question (peer support/thoughts):** The writer asked the listener for their opinion of their ideas or their writing. They seem to be seeking peer approval and valuing their audiences thoughts.

**Self-Correct Writing (during the conference):** Comments that were made by the writer suggest they found errors in their writing such as points to make revisions during the conference and then made them.

**Think/Consider/Spark Ideas:** These comments made by the writer suggest that the listener made a comment that got the writer thinking. It then sparked a new idea by the writer.

**Redirects Conference:** These comments were made by the writer trying to get the listener back on task during the conference.

**Rejects Suggestion (idea):** These comments made by the writer were rejections of suggested ideas that the listener made. The ideas were suggested during pre-writing OR when the writer was stuck during drafting.

**Rejects Suggestion (revision):** These comments made by the writer were rejections of suggested revisions that the listener made. The revisions were suggested during drafting.



**Response (clarify idea):** These comments made by the writer were made to clarify their ideas about their writing. They were in response to a question that the listener asked. Idea responses were made during pre-writing conferences or when writer was sharing new ideas as they drafted.

**Response (clarify writing):** These comments made by the writer were made to clarify their writing. They were in response to a question that the listener asked. Clarification responses were made during drafting or revision conference when the writer was trying to clarify something they had already written.

#### Listener Responses:

**Gives-Up/Frustrated:** Comments made by the listener that suggest they are frustrated with the conference and giving up trying to help the writer.

**Off-Task:** Comments made by the listener that are keeping the conference from being focused on the writing. They could be comments directed to the writer or other peers in the classroom.

**Question (clarify):** The listener asks a question to the writer because they want to clarify something the writer said in their thinking or in their writing.

**Question (ideas):** The listener asks questions about the writers ideas or to help them get an idea for a new piece or a piece they are stuck on.

**Question (purpose):** The listener asks questions that suggest they are confused about the reason they are conferencing.

**Redirects:** The listener makes a comment in an attempt to redirect the conference from being off-task to on-task.

**Reinforce Writer Thoughts:** Comments made by the listener that reinforce an idea the writer had in a positive way.

**Suggestion (clarify/revise):** Listener makes a suggestion to the writer in hopes to help them clarify their writing usually a suggested revision they should make.

**Suggestion (edit):** Listener makes a suggestion to the writer about ways to edit their writing (conventions).

**Suggestion (idea):** Listener makes a suggestion to the writer to give ideas for a new piece OR a draft the writer is stuck on.